

THE CRISIS OF SPIRIT:
IMPLICATIONS FROM SCHLEIERMACHER FOR THE
REVITALIZATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

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Richard R. Kurrasch
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Richard R. Kurrasch,
*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

Faculty Committee

SasC Verheyden
allg. maone

Date _____

Allen J. Moore
Dean

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ABSTRACT

The Crisis of Spirit:

Implications from Schleiermacher for the Revitalization of the Local Church

Richard R. Kurrasch

Contemporary mainline Protestant churches have suffered staggering membership and financial losses in recent years. While many reasons account for this trend, it is also reflective of a larger crisis of spirit, i.e., a concern that a traditional creed and even vocabulary cannot adequately address a post-modern, secular age. This paper draws upon the methodology and theological insights of Friedrich Schleiermacher and modern religious education theory to suggest that the reversal of these trends and the revitalization of the church can be found in an educational program that emphasizes spiritual formation.

The principal insights found in Schleiermacher's theology include his understanding of universal God-consciousness (experienced in the feeling of absolute dependence), the derivative nature of dogma, the wide variety of ways in which religious-consciousness can be stimulated, and the role of the Redeemer.

Since religious-consciousness can develop, a religious education program stressing experience and growth forms a ready partnership with such insights from Schleiermacher. In particular, the theoretical concepts of spiritual direction and individual and corporate pilgrimage and especially John Westerhoff's understanding of catechesis are all avenues in the church's educational ministry. Basic also is an appreciation of the pastor-as-teacher.

The twin emphasis on experience and growth encourages a broader religious life than merely conforming (or refusing to conform) to a "received theology." The resulting spiritual freedom, however, is not without structure, for Schleiermacher's christology channels that freedom within a Christian religious-consciousness; even then the process of spiritual development allows considerable latitude and avoids the limitations of a Christian orthodoxy dating to a pre-modern mindset.

The paper clearly affirms the relevance of spiritual-religious language and concepts in a complex, technological age and maintains that a faith pilgrimage is not negated by secularity. It also affirms that the revitalization of the church is possible, but only if the church's leaders (lay and clergy) are highly intentional about identifying goals and setting objectives. This in turn speaks to the need for a practical theology of education.

Dedicated to

Dr. Jack C. Verheyden
who opened the door to FDES

and to

Ann, Peter and Deborah
who gave me the freedom to look inside.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Matters of the spirit and spirituality have long plagued, mystified, and even embarrassed churches of the mainline Protestant tradition. This is not to say that the church has no spirituality, for in some cases its spirituality may be not so much absent or deficient as unarticulated. Whether deficient or simply nebulous, spirituality remains a problem for many contemporary Protestants, and this project will focus on this dilemma using the methodology and insights of Friedrich Schleiermacher. The thesis is that Schleiermacher's methodology and theological insights provide a substantive resolution to the spiritual vacuum underlying the problems of the more moderate and liberal churches and that this methodology can address those churches that have traditionally drawn upon the moderately affluent, predominantly white middle-class whose members bring the sophistication of a cosmopolitan and urban environment and who want a more intellectually-palpable form of Christianity than the fundamentalist, pentecostal, and evangelical churches have offered.

As the title of this project suggests, the "dilemma" might more accurately be termed a "crisis" in the sense that it correlates with a church that itself faces a critical situation today. Observers of the contemporary church well know that serious problems afflict the local

congregations of American Protestantism. If indeed the situation is primarily a crisis of spirit, then the revitalization of the local church depends, understandably enough, on a theological recovery of spirit. This recovery, though, must accomplish two ends: (1) the "spirit" must be accessible experientially; and (2) theology must help explain the meaning of one's religious-spiritual experience and nurture him or her in an ongoing religious-spiritual journey. Again, Schleiermacher's approach is particularly well-suited to this task.

What is the shape of this critical situation today? In general terms, the church is ever in need of a vision to shape and energize its life. A people on a journey, a ship at sea, pilgrims on the way to the promised land—such images have characterized the saints from time immemorial, but in the last two decades, the vision has become obscured, the ship has lost its rudder, and the pilgrims have followed the siren of competing claims to fulfillment, meaning, and truth.

In the mainline Protestant churches, the effect is not limited to, but is certainly visible in, statistical measures where, since the mid-1960's, loss has been the key term—loss in numbers, levels of participation, and financial backing. Also significant here is the loss of the church's influence as an important voice in the social issues of the time and its prestige as an institution in general. Declining morale often accompanies this situation, especially for those congregations that find their cultural context radically different from what it was in "better" times.

Churches have responded to their dilemmas in various ways. Management techniques, insights from church growth programs, and

experimental programming have led in the creative efforts to modernize and update the church's organizational life. Others have tried to reverse trends in the present by reaching back to the past in the hope that what worked once might work again. Both approaches have proven inadequate. For the issue at hand lies far deeper than either a face lifting or the momentum from the past can mediate. More precisely, the issue is a matter of spirit.

Why is this the case? What is so unique about these closing years of the 20th century? The next chapter will explore briefly some of the ingredients of this "post-modern" era, and it will suffice to note here that a number of factors converge together. The rate of social change, the explosion of information, the momentum of secularization, the intrusion of pluralism, and the threat of nuclear, ecological, or socio-economic catastrophe have conspired to create an environment not easily addressed by the church's traditional language and formulas; like other institutions, the church has not kept pace with the felt needs that surface in people who must cope with a rapidly-changing and precarious world.

One apparent exception to a problem-plagued church, of course, comes from the theological right (the evangelical, fundamentalist, and charismatic expressions of the faith), but it is noteworthy that even the "success" of these churches is relative. If one looks at the vast numbers of people who have no meaningful religious identity, the great strides from the right lose some of their luster. The more moderate churches certainly cannot take comfort in this. For realizing that, on balance, everyone misses the mark only heightens the dilemma; if not the

orthodox formulas, if not management techniques, if not the latest in programming, then what? As indicated above, this project begins with the perspective that the problems of the mainline church today point primarily to a crisis of spirit and that, accordingly, this crisis finds its resolution not in superficial change but in a theological conceptualization of spirituality that weds experience and content.

In all honesty, even the liberal churches have benefited from the neo-pentecostal movement and the reminder that experience compliments sterile formulas. The Charismatic Movement left many behind, though, because of its excessive emotionality and shallow theological formulation. Theological respectability still matters in this sophisticated age which must deal with an information revolution and the competing claims of a pluralistic society. Building bridges between orthodoxy and experience has not always proceeded apace, but this project begins with the thesis that Schleiermacher proves himself eminently "modern" in his ability to do this.

Initially, it may seem contradictory to draw upon the 19th century for insights that will shed light on what is already a 21st century church. However, any felt contradiction is more apparent than real. For one thing, Schleiermacher is frequently cited as the "father of modern Protestant theology" or the "father of liberal theology," and he has had enormous influence on the schools of thought that have in turn¹ shaped the modern, liberal church. So partly because he continues to influence contemporary theologians and partly because he himself addressed a new age with striking similarities to western culture today, the 19th century theological forebear of mainline Protestantism has much

to say to a church which stands at the dawn of the next millennium. Not simply what is believed (the dogmatic component) but how it is communicated, perceived, and internalized (the experiential component) and especially how the two sides can be bridged--this describes the crisis of spirit today, and the insights of Schleiermacher are uniquely capable of speaking to this condition.

The scope of this paper will necessarily be limited to selected topics in Schleiermacher's thought that shed light upon the nature of religious (specifically Christian) experience and the language used to explain and understand such experience. Since much of the contemporary crisis in spirituality has to do with an inadequate understanding of the person of Christ and a narrow vision of the church, this paper will especially concentrate on Schleiermacher's christology and doctrine of the church and their implications for a vital church today. Specifically, the project asks how Schleiermacher's understanding of religious consciousness, informed by Christ the Redeemer and nurtured in the faith community, can awaken and guide a church in spiritual crisis. His overall influence on modern theology and the history of the church, while momentous, lies beyond the boundaries of the present effort as does a systematic appraisal of his total contribution.

In so far as theology (meaning the interrelationship between experience and content) informs and shapes ministry, one may cautiously expect to find a certain degree of correlation between the theological endeavor and actual ministerial practice, for each benefits from and responds to the other. That perspective is adopted here: the theological task will enable a congregation (not just the clergy) to

envision its possibilities and it will suggest ways to reach those possibilities. Theology bears fruit in actual ministry; ministry presses for further theological effort.³ To the extent that Schleiermacher sheds light on the spiritual crisis affecting the church (a theological dilemma), implications for the congregation's worship, nurture, and outreach should also emerge (the functional disciplines of ministry). Building upon Schleiermacher's view that religious consciousness develops, this project will specifically focus on the educational ministry of the church, drawing upon such contemporary theorists as John H. Westerhoff and others who indicate ways such religious development can take place.

The next chapter (Chapter 2: Schleiermacher's Methodology as an Approach to Religious Experience) will define in more detail the components of the spiritual hunger within the American Church and Schleiermacher's unique contribution in addressing that hunger. Chapter 3 (Christ the Redeemer) and Chapter 4 (The Community of the Redeemed) explore Schleiermacher's christology and doctrine of the church respectively. Each focuses on the theological content that gives shape to and helps guide the direction of one's religious experience. The final chapter (Chapter 5: Reflections on the Vital Church) will draw some practical implications from Schleiermacher's theology for the church's life and ministry, especially in the way the church might nurture its people in their inward integrity of faith and outward witness and service.

As the last chapter indicates, a vital church is certainly a possibility; given the condition of the world and the desperation in so

many people's lives, it is also a necessity; and the writer believes that the mainstream, moderate-to-liberal Protestant Churches in America have a crucial role to play in addressing the deep needs of the present time. For such churches to turn from a defensive, confused posture, so characteristic of the last twenty years, and towards a renewed vision and calling will take a concerted effort from many voices; it is hoped that this project will find its place in that process by showing how the development of religious consciousness does in fact rekindle a lost vision and commitment to the mission of the church.

NOTES: CHAPTER 1

1

C.W. Christian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1979), 11, 12; B. A. Gerrish, A Prince of the Church (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 11, 32. Christian makes the point that Schleiermacher is more than a liberal theologian in that he marks the turning point into the modern world. Dilthey calls Schleiermacher the "Kant of Protestant theology" in the sense that he destroyed an outdated metaphysics in theology as Kant did in philosophy. See Martin Redeker, Schleiermacher: Life and Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 149.

2

For a further discussion of the similarities between Schleiermacher's setting and the modern setting, see Chapter 2, page 20 of this project.

3

For a much broader treatment of this theme, see James W. Fowler, "Practical Theology and the Shaping of Christian Lives", Practical Theology, ed. Don S. Browning (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 148-166.

CHAPTER 2

Schleiermacher's Methodology as an
Approach to Religious ExperienceWhy Schleiermacher? The Man and
His Times

Had Schleiermacher not appeared in the latter part of the 18th century and early 19th century, a modern church equipped to address the mentality of a new world might well not have emerged. For beginning late in the 17th century, the western world began to make the transition into the modern age, and suddenly Christianity found itself in a milieu vastly different from both the world in which it had first appeared and from the Greco-Roman culture of the Middle Ages.¹ As "the father of modern theology", Schleiermacher's task was monumental: to bring the old faith into a new age.²

The threat posed by the Enlightenment in the 18th century should not be minimized. For in the 19th (as for the 20th and in anticipatory sense for the post-modern 21st century as well) the question was raised as to whether vital faith was even possible. In light of the rise of historical consciousness and the reliance on scientific empiricism, what case could one make for Christianity and the traditional formulations of Christian theology? Given the changed intellectual climate of the modern world, how might one approach the theologian's assignment?

Historical consciousness, for example, had the effect of relativizing religious dogma--if not religion itself. Trust in empirical data asked the disturbing question of where one turns for evidence of God. In fact, in the optimistic climate of the time, even the need for faith seemed to dissipate. For surely humanity had within its own resources the means to solve the problems of human society. Reason became the tool whereby men and women would master the universe and ascertain³ truth.

The external challenge from the Enlightenment had the singular result within the church of undercutting its authority. After all, if the social anthropologists could trace and account for the development of religious pluralism as cultural phenomena subject to historical conditioning, then on what basis could one claim authority for, say, the Scriptures as a unique, authoritative religious expression?⁴ (This proved especially troublesome in the encounter between geology and Genesis.) If autonomous reason supercedes mere doctrine or tradition, in particular the doctrine of this special revelation of which the church is the sole custodian, then the church loses its power to claim the allegiance of the people as the custodian of final truth. For truth, to the extent that it exists at all, must be available to all people everywhere, and where "truth" rests on the authority of⁵ tradition, it can no longer be called "truth" as such. Religion, yes, but not truth.

Carried one step further, the thinking of the New Age had dethroned⁶ both God and humankind, the crown of creation. Through the Middle Ages, humanity had belonged in a purposeful world designed by God.

Copernicus (16th century) removed persons from the physical and psychological center of the universe which subsequently raised some question about their significance. Newton (17th century) demonstrated that gravity, not God, controlled the worlds, suggesting that God was the remote cause at best. Deism, popular at the time, bowed to the primacy of the scientific method and allowed for the First Cause in a predominately mechanistic universe. The collapse of traditional notions of God, the demise of biblical mythology, the erosion of biblical and dogmatic authority—it was definitely a New Age that Schleiermacher⁷ addressed.

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher was born in 1768, the descendent of three generations of Reformed ministers. Ten years later, his father (who himself had Deistic leanings) experienced a personal renewal of faith under the influence of Moravian pietism, an event of such importance that the parents decided to entrust the education of their children to the Moravians. This proved to be a decision of enormous consequence for Friedrich, for in 1783, in the middle of his fourteenth year, the young Schleiermacher experienced his own religious awakening, a conversion experience which he described as the birthdate⁸ of his "higher life" and the beginning of a "higher order."

The Moravian emphasis on experience would follow Schleiermacher for the rest of his life. It confirmed for him that religion could not be taught but only awakened and that the beginning of the religious life depended less on the formality of creed and doctrine and more on the Spirit or simply grace as experienced in feeling.⁹ This by no means disparages doctrine, for the religious life needs both doctrine and

experience, creed and feeling; but the lively, warm pietistic devotion, and especially the joy such devotion evoked, was a necessary correction to the rigid formalism that had followed the Reformation by the 1700's. Pietism did not attack the Reformation faith but rather changed the emphasis from the mere intellectual acceptance of traditional belief to the personal experience of a living faith grounded in creeds.¹⁰ Schleiermacher's unique contribution in the present day begins where he began, i.e., with the discovery that rational religion is indeed often sterile, at least when divorced from the prior experience of personal faith, and though he would soon rebel against the regimentation of the Moravian school and the narrowness of the pietistic curriculum, Schleiermacher would continue to unite his great capacity for feeling with his towering intellect. Though his own religious development would take him far from the Brethren, he would still identify himself twenty years later as a "Moravian, though of a higher order."¹¹

In 1785, Schleiermacher left Niesky for the Moravian Seminary at Barby. The seminary continued the strict pietistic flavor in its curricular offerings, but the Enlightenment spirit and the humanistic movement of German poetry also touched the young Schleiermacher.¹² As a result, he began to lose the "world contempt" of the Moravians and considerably broadened his intellectual framework. Two years later, in 1787, he moved to the University of Halle which had the dual effect of liberating him from the restrictions of Brethren life and introducing him to the philosophy of Kant. Halle also represented a crisis of sorts for Schleiermacher in that he found himself sinking into religious skepticism. While Kant was an important influence on Schleiermacher, he

also became disenchanted with the rationalist Enlightenment theology
¹³
 represented by Kant.

The two years he spent at Drossen with his Uncle Samuel (1789-90) were the lowpoint in Schleiermacher's life, marked by continued skepticism, resignation, and poor health. His uncle and father both urged him to complete his studies and prepare for his theology exams, but the student seems to have preferred his own curriculum of studies and writings; he continued his work on Kant and elevated ethics over
¹⁴
 religious feelings and other theological interests. The turn around came during a pleasant interlude when he served as a tutor in the home of Count Dohna. This time of intellectual and spiritual recovery in a
¹⁵
 new setting also enabled him to experience the meaning of community. Of special note during this time was his discovery that the substance of faith might be the same even if the formulation of faith was different.
¹⁶
 This in turn stimulated him to look for the inner essence of religion.

While at Drossen (1790) Schleiermacher had taken his first exam. After leaving the Dohna family, he returned to his uncle's house, prepared for, and completed his second exam, and in 1794 became the assistant pastor in the Reformed Church at Landsberg. In 1796 he moved to Berlin to accept the post of Chaplain at the Charite Hospital. This proved to be the beginning of Schleiermacher's creative period, and during these years (in 1799) On Religion: Speeches To Its Cultured Despisers was published. The book caused enough of a sensation that some
¹⁷
 say it inaugurated the modern period in religious thought.

The Speeches must have had a long gestation period, probably extending back to the early years among the Moravians and certainly to the Halle experience where Schleiermacher had pursued a serious study of Kant. In 1781, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason had appeared. In this treatise, Kant argued that reason has its limits, at least as far as speculative knowledge is concerned. Since nothing certain can be said about such matters as the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, religion has its true home in the practical sphere of the active, ethical, doing life. The existence of God is a matter of faith which is tested in the moral life, i.e., by doing, the self can receive a rational answer but not a knowing one.

Such metaphysical agnosticism had its value for Schleiermacher, principally in forcing him to look in another direction besides traditional metaphysics and the sterile rationalistic moorings of Enlightenment theology. Its own answer, "practical reason," did not seem a sufficiently satisfactory alternative to Schleiermacher either. So, while Schleiermacher was greatly influenced by Kant, he did not become a Kantian himself, because Kant could not help him in the process of reconstructing the faith. In going beyond Kant's skepticism, Schleiermacher produced the Speeches.

The "cultured despisers" to whom the Speeches are addressed are not the indifferent masses nor even the totally hostile critics but the literary and artistic community whose members only imagined they despised religion. When Schleiermacher went to Berlin in 1796, he became active in the learned and cultural circles where he met people who were sensitive to the deeper dimensions of life. That they saw little need for traditional religion or God was no stumbling block to

Schleiermacher, for he felt that the error lay not with religion per se but with a particular and inadequate expression of religion which, from Schleiermacher's perspective, did not correspond to true religion²¹ anyway. Rather than their being the enemies of religion, their deep sensitivity equipped them to be allies in the goal of redefining religion in terms compatible with experience and comprehensible in a new age. Schleiermacher invites these friends to join in a revolution in theology, namely, to find the experiential component in one's own life that will open the door to true religion.

Discussion about the Speeches always raises the question of Schleiermacher's relation to romanticism. As noted, when Schleiermacher went to Berlin in 1796, he developed close ties with the literary and poetic circles of the time and he immersed himself in German idealism,²² meaning the many-faceted movement known today as romanticism. Romanticism was a reaction against the cold, analytical, technological reasoning of the scientific mentality and an attempt to rediscover the rich unity of life behind appearances; in the romantic's view, Kant and the Enlightenment provided a good way to know and an unsatisfactory way to live, precisely because the Enlightenment perspective missed the dynamic relations of life and the nature of life as a living whole. Romanticism appealed to imagination and intuition in order to recover a deeper dimension of life, and in that respect, Schleiermacher was a²³ "romantic". In that the young theologian directed the Speeches to the romantic group (the "cultured despisers") of which he was a part, his use of their language should not be surprising; in fact, to address them on their own ground he had to use their language; besides, he must have

reveled in the new vehicle he found in Berlin to express the piety of his youth which had languished under the dry rationalism of Kant.²⁴ His critics say he crossed the boundary between imagination and reality, reducing the spiritual life to an unclear, mysterious, subjective inwardness that at best sentimentalizes the religious life. But Schleiermacher was not a romantic. He appropriated much from his friends, but as his later christological formulations would show (especially in The Christian Faith), the higher life of Christian faith rests on the encounter with Christ and the community (the church) created by him.²⁵ Intuition, imagination, and even subjective inwardness would find shape and direction in the language of redemption.

In 1802, Schleiermacher began a pastorate in Stolp, a provincial city which must have stood in marked contrast to the intellectual and cultural opportunities in Berlin. Actually, it marked the transition to the quieter, more methodological work after the Romantic period.²⁶ He also was actively involved in the proposed union between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

Schleiermacher returned to the University of Halle in 1804 as the first Reformed theologian to join the all-Lutheran faculty. During this time, he lectured on Dialectic (his philosophical system) and published Christmas Eve (a remarkable Platonic dialogue which is considered crucial for understanding Schleiermacher's theology.)²⁷ Though most of his energies were directed to the academic environment, he remained active in local church affairs. At the university he lectured on such topics as hermeneutics and ethics and devoted time to his writing, but he was not well received because Halle had been a center for the

Enlightenment perspective and Schleiermacher and others represented a post-Enlightenment perspective. He was even called an atheist and heretic.²⁸ In any event, Prussia fell to Napoleon and Halle was closed (1806).

In 1809, Schleiermacher was asked to organize the theological curriculum for the University of Berlin, and the result was A Brief Outline of the Study of Theology (1810). The years at Berlin, which continued until his death in 1834, also saw the publication of his most significant work and one of the most important works in modern Protestant thought, The Christian Faith (1821-22; revised 1831-32). The earlier years at Berlin (1796-1802) represent his intuitive-creative period; the systematic period begins at Stolp, continues through Halle,²⁹ and culminates in Berlin. In the earlier period, Schleiermacher was preoccupied with a comprehensive theological-philosophical system; after 1811, he focused more specifically on christological issues and showed a greater concern for historical Christianity.

This latter period (1811-34) deserves further comment because Schleiermacher is often judged as a philosopher, not as a theologian. That Schleiermacher was both philosopher and theologian cannot, of course, be disputed. The question is, which prevailed? Philosophical schools and individuals usually cited as of prime importance in understanding Schleiermacher include German idealism, Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling—impressive company for Schleiermacher—the-³⁰ philosopher.

Nevertheless, Schleiermacher's real interests were religious and Christian. When he left the Moravians, the issue was doctrine, not

faith. If anything, he wanted a conceptualization of the faith that would preserve Moravian values without compromising an open-minded inquiry into the truth. In effect, he achieved that very reconciliation: he kept the faith (especially the experience of faith) of his youth while recasting its doctrinal setting (hence his self-appraisal that he was still a Moravian, though of a higher order.)³¹ In the process, he demonstrated that Christianity can borrow from philosophy and let it help shape doctrinal expression without losing what is essentially Christian.³² Schleiermacher's continuing importance for the contemporary church stems in no small measure from his willingness to look at truth where he found it, which meant embracing not only the various scholarly disciplines but also (and especially) one's personal experience as well.³³ At a time when historical consciousness was laying the groundwork for modern pluralism, such a methodology certainly saved the faith from the charge of being a rather arbitrary perspective arrayed alongside other arbitrary perspectives, and it opened a door that "cultural despisers" and others had considered closed. In other words, for Schleiermacher, religion in general has its place first in human experience; philosophy, history and tradition, language, and the other scholarly pursuits (including theology itself) help shape one's understanding of the prior experience.

This summary of Schleiermacher's life has highlighted primarily his intellectual journey, and for the sake of balance, the scope of his interests should be noted, however briefly.³⁴ In addition to his academic life, Schleiermacher's service as a Reformed Church minister embraced both the church and the community. He was a champion of the

freedom of the church and an active proponent of the union of Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Prussia. He believed that the moral self serves the public and the state;³⁵ consequently, he worked for the liberal reform of the political and social organization of Prussia and advocated a new political ethic which valued homeland, people, and the state. In 1809, Schleiermacher married the widow of his friend, an Army Chaplain named Von Willich. They lost their nine-year-old son to diphtheria, and Schleiermacher himself preached the funeral service. Earlier in his life, Schleiermacher had pledged himself to eternal youth, by which he meant an inner attitude of freedom and joy;³⁶ this pledge he kept until his death in 1834.

Schleiermacher and the 20th Century:

A Continuing Legacy

As one might expect, a man of Schleiermacher's stature was not without his critics. Some questioned his allegiance to the Reformed tradition, and Emil Brunner took it a step further and asked if he was even a Christian.³⁷ For the most part, though, Schleiermacher's contribution supports and encourages the theological task in the present day. For living at the dawn of the modern age himself, Schleiermacher faced a changing world and his legacy illuminates the process by which a viable faith can address the rapidly-changing world of the present.

At issue is his opponents' disagreement with the view that the modern mentality demands a radical overhauling of Christian language.³⁸ Schleiermacher answered in his day with the Speeches; he might have answered in the present day with a less poetic, but harder-hitting, analysis of institutional religion! The point is that new times do

impose new forms of thought. The "new times" of his day led him to break with the traditional expressions of the "evangelical Protestant consciousness"³⁹--and yet remain within the faith. The radically new times challenging the present generation make his approach similarly appealing: it worked then; it might work now. Emmanuel Hirsch summarized Schleiermacher's achievement by suggesting that the theologian was an epochal thinker who helps the modern soul wander that narrow path between a skeptical atheism and mythical orthodoxy.⁴⁰ If those are the choices in the present day, neither of which will awaken and stir the religious consciousness, then it becomes all the more important to listen to the voice of one who did walk that path. Schleiermacher was a pioneer in his time who continues to blaze a trail through the tumultuous days of the present time.

The Crisis of Spirit Today

There can be little doubt that the 20th century has experienced the most radical change in the history of the human race and that the closing years of this century in particular are witnessing what will be seen in retrospect as a profound transition in human society. So nebulous is the shape of the future that observers scarcely know by what name to call it, but surely a "post-modern" society is rapidly transforming the way people and nations will think about themselves and the nature of the world. Highly advanced technology, the explosive growth and dissemination of knowledge through computers, efficiency, and the management of the whole through an elaborate technocracy are just some of the features of the post-modern world.

Of interest at least to religious leaders is whether or not the
 post-modern age of tomorrow will also be post-Christian as well.⁴¹ If
 there is to be a viable church it will certainly be "post-Protestant;"⁴²
 the suggestion has been made that it will also be "post-Bourgeois."⁴³
 While this sounds like a frightful prospect, it may simply signal the
 end of the "successful church" syndrome, enabling the church to reform
 itself without overpowering institutional pressures.

In this transitional period, though, where the shape of the future
 is far from clear, the post-modern world presents a challenge that
 approaches the dimensions of a crisis. For one thing, some question
 whether modernization (practically synonymous with westernization) can
 even survive.⁴⁴ Granting that western culture does have a future, some
 raise serious questions about the place of spirituality in a post-
 modern/post-Christian age. For the crisis generated by a world in the
 throes of vast changes with uncertain resolution will inevitably sweep
 virtually all aspects of human endeavor into its uncertain caldron as
 well, including that of spiritual pursuits. Since all the foundations
 tremble today, and to the extent that the trembling is felt as a crisis,
 a crisis of spirit should be anticipated and in fact such a conclusion
 seems inescapable. Westerhoff surely understates the case in observing
 that "the 20th century is not likely to be known as the age of
 spirituality. More reasonably it may be remembered as the era of
 retarded consciousness."⁴⁵ Although directed against Schleiermacher,
 Brunner identifies the crisis of religion as originating within
 Christianity itself, charging that Christianity has lost its inner
 bearings and has become unspiritual and false.⁴⁶

To the surprise of no one, the modern age has indeed brought a profound crisis regarding the viability of a doctrine of God.⁴⁷ Just one example, the age-old problem of theodicy, will illustrate why God⁴⁸ seems if not absent from then at least irrelevant to modern culture. For in light of the horrors of the 20th century, the question has shifted for many today: whereas the problem of God once focused on his existence, the problem of God today focuses on his goodness, even if he⁴⁹ does exist, and his power to achieve the good.

Also playing a role in the spiritual crisis today is the rise of historical consciousness which more commonly surfaces as the problem of pluralism and a sense that doctrine, if not all religion, is relative. Schleiermacher also faced the challenge posed by comparative anthropology, namely, why are there religions? Schleiermacher answered that while religious sensitivity was universal, social and historical factors conditioned its expression, and he developed an elaborate scheme showing the upward progression of religious consciousness from animism through polytheism to monotheism, the highest expression of which was⁵⁰ Christianity due to its universalism and ethical depth. While there may be some reluctance today to establish religious gradients, the fact is that Schleiermacher did address the same concern in his own time and he shows that religious pluralism does not compromise the development of⁵¹ the religious consciousness in general.

The spiritual crisis afflicting both church and society today is intimately related to another phenomenon, that of secularization. Admittedly, the mere reference to secularism entails some risks, for a certain ambiguity has attached itself to the term. In addition, the

charge of secularism today carries a pejorative connotation, as if the secular stood in opposition to the sacred. Such is not intended here. Secular in the present context is used descriptively to characterize a certain mentality, decidedly non-spiritual, which has four components. First, Science explains the natural world without a hypothesis of God's existence. Then, Technology, or the application of science, brings the risks and contingencies of human life under extensive control. An Industrial and Bureaucratic Organization creates a social network upon which the individual is highly dependent and within which he feels quite secure. Finally, an Anthropocentric structure to modern culture substitutes the created for the Creator, eventually, emancipating⁵² humanity from God. Such a modern/post-modern secular world lives as if God were absent; indeed, given the irrelevance of the divine in the secular mindset to the course of daily life, God in effect ceases to exist, at least in a functional sense. In that respect, secular society is accordingly post-Christian as well; it has lost a sense of the "spirit".

"Secular" comes from the Latin, saeculum, meaning "age," "world" or "time span" ("flow of time," temporality.)⁵³ It removes all concerns for ultimates, ignores the depth of reality and tends to understand the world on its own terms, quite apart from any reference to God or some kind of conditional positing. Fulfillment in the secular mindset, to the extent that it comes at all, comes in this age, this world, this life.⁵⁴ As mentioned above, in the secular world, God is simply absent,⁵⁵ not as a metaphysical statement but as an experiential phenomenon. In summary, secularization produces a new form of consciousness:

It has construed knowledge as empirically demonstrable facts; it has subordinated ethics and aesthetics to what works or is workable; it has reduced intimacy to sexuality and inflated sexuality to a fetishism. It has come to see faith as belief or a belief system and, in what passes for tolerance or "understanding", maintains a dogmatic attitude of relativism regarding the truth or appropriateness of all such "systems of belief."⁵⁶

57

Without a doubt, secularity has benefited humanity. But secularity also has its limitations as a way of life, for it essentially offers a unidimensional and ultimately inadequate approach to the needs and questions that transcend (the word is chosen intentionally) the secular mindset. In a word, the same men and women who rejoice in the freedom and the opportunities of a scientific, technological age also yearn for something that the secular cannot address, namely, the meaning and purpose of life; encountering the limitations of secularity to explain life opens the door to the spiritual or more generally the realm of religion.

While religious-spiritual language may seem incomprehensible or irrelevant to the secular mentality, the religious-spiritual task is not. In fact, so pervasive is the feeling of alienation in a complex secular society and so great is the need for meaning that religion will of necessity survive.⁵⁸ Pannenberg argues that secular culture eventually breaks down because the agencies of the state and the public culture, once emancipated from God, can provide meaning only as a matter of subjective discretion. Some choices which promise meaning seem trite precisely because of their arbitrary nature and so they fail as possible answers to the deeper questions of life's meaning and purpose. Lacking those answers, meaninglessness and loneliness result, even to the point

that personal identity suffers. All of this stems from the (functional) absence of God and the failure to recognize the need for the spiritual side of one's existence. If one's survival, emotional and otherwise, depends on the development of the spiritual side of existence, then the absence of the spiritual (God) is a dangerous sign. The prevalence of neuroses, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide rates all confirm the view that the process of secularization has about reached its limits. If so, modern culture must eventually become more "spiritual" (God-conscious) because people who seek for a sense of their self-identity in vain find that situation intolerable.⁵⁹ John Westerhoff says it even more positively: the hunger for a new spirituality signals the end of the secular age.⁶⁰

Understandably, a secular age initially finds it difficult to listen to the language of spirituality. For the word itself does not belong and the wide variety of activities identified as "spiritual" seems more puzzling than illuminating. That the person who withdraws from society for prayer and meditation and the person who strives to change oppressive social systems are both engaged in "spiritual" pursuits will confuse the issue until it is understood that the spiritual ocean is wide and the currents are many. Like gathering water from a river, one only grasps a small part and even that quickly spills back into the river, but one can still say something about the river.⁶¹ So with the spirit.

In spite of the varied approaches to spiritual matters, one might simply define spirituality as a life that is centered on Spirit;⁶² in this context, "spirit" has a twin focus.⁶³ As Spirit, the focus is on

God, in particular, on God's manifestation in the creation. Especially does God's Spirit denote God's power at work in human beings creating, redeeming, sustaining, and sanctifying humankind. The Spirit empowers believers in particular to live a spiritual life, i.e., a life that goes beyond the secular world view for its meaning and direction. As such, spirit focuses simultaneously on persons in their universal, God-given spiritual capacity through which they transcend the unidimensional limitations of the secular and establish a mutual relationship with God.⁶⁴ Spirituality distinguishes humanity from the lower orders and surfaces in human beings as the capacity for thoughts and hopes and dreams, in feelings of possibility through a sense of oughtness, and finally in the realization of personal mortality. In this context Reinhold Niebuhr speaks of the self-transcending capacity of persons as spiritual in nature.⁶⁵ As spiritual beings, persons may engage upon that activity whereby they grow in the Spirit of God who has found them in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. In fact, from this perspective, one cannot even become fully human apart from spirituality, that quality of life that focuses on and is found in the Spirit.⁶⁶

For Schleiermacher, spirituality has to do with God-consciousness or the disposition to God-consciousness, the development of which is limited by the power of the flesh.⁶⁷ This suggests that spirituality is essentially dynamic; spiritual practice adds depth to an otherwise secular existence and drives the person towards greater fulfillment by changing the nature of one's life. As one writer on the subject puts it:

[Spirituality] derives from spiritus, the life-giving force which stems from God, quickens the baptized Christian, and

transforms the relationship he has with his fellow human beings. There is nothing cerebral or esoteric about spirituality; it is the core of the Christian experience, the encounter with God in real life and action....It is the mode of living, the essential disposition, of the believer, and it imparts a new dimension to the believer's life. In other words, it is not only a new way of looking at human life, but a new way of living it.⁶⁸

When the issue promises human fulfillment, even if the process entails great personal change, it finds a ready audience, for fulfillment and the meaningful life seem to be the exception rather than the rule in modern, secular society. In fact, so deeply do people hunger for such fulfillment that they will listen even to a "strange language" like the language of spirituality. It need not remain a strange language, however, for the initial spiritual stirrings (or better for Schleiermacher, the early religious feeling) will develop and bear discernible fruit. One's life experience will confirm the validity of the invitation.

Schleiermacher on Religion

As the preceeding suggests, personal experience is an essential component to the spiritual life, at least as important as doctrine and in the beginning more so. For much doctrine has the unfortunate liability of asking people to conform to a system which may not (and in the secular age in transition probably will not) correlate with their present mindset and the experiences of that mindset. Appeals to authority to bolster a dogmatic system are increasingly inadequate. Theological systems do play a crucial function in the religious life (as the next chapter will show), but they do not stimulate the spiritual-religious life until a prior spiritual experience has been acknowledged

and named. This sequence (experience first, followed by the theological-doctrinal explanation of the experience which in turn shapes further experience and in general develops the spiritual life) figured prominently in Schleiermacher's ability to address his own modern age in transition, and it is crucial to the contemporary church's efforts to address the post-modern age as well.⁶⁹

For Schleiermacher, religious experience (or God-consciousness) is universal; in all human self-consciousness is the awareness of the divine, however muted.⁷⁰ Certainly for many, religious awareness needs awakening, but human beings contain within themselves a fundamental religious consciousness, not to be confused with psychological processes or logical thought, that surfaces at its most fundamental level as the awareness of the divine manifesting itself in human life.

Such a definition of religion eliminates much that passes for religion in the popular understanding, including religion as morality, religion as metaphysical pursuit, and religion as institutional practice. Religion may have its moral, metaphysical, and institutional components, but such components are not to be confused with religion's basic essence and its own unique province in the human soul.

The confusion of "pure" religion with its social and historical manifestation led many in Schleiermacher's day to reject religion. Schleiermacher met such religious "despisers" in the cultured circles of Berlin's literary society in the late 18th century. As it turned out, they despised not so much religion but a certain understanding of religion, a religion that focused on dogma and not on a sense of the Infinite. Schleiermacher himself rejected religion in the former sense,

but as he expressed in the Speeches, religion as experienced awareness of the Infinite is another matter altogether, a matter for which the artistic and literary people are especially well-suited because of their great sensitivity. To the modern-day "cultured despisers", the church can similarly suggest that what passes for "religion" in the popular understanding perhaps bears little resemblance to the real nature of the religious dimension in human existence. This will especially capture the attention of religion's detractors if "religion" is divorced from the dogmas and institutions that fail to address and illuminate the experience and needs of a post-modern, secular society.

In all honesty, there is a certain risk inherent in this methodology, namely, that beginning with religious experience one may fall short of faith, specifically biblical faith. Critics sometimes will distinguish the two positions as "theology from below" and "theology from above."⁷¹ Theology from below begins with experience, not the Bible, and because it relies on subjective experience and lacks the authoritative guidance of Scripture, it may produce what Bonhoeffer called a "divine double" or "counterpart." Theology from above, on the other hand, characteristic of a figure like Karl Barth, begins with the Word and lets God's self-revelation in the Scriptures define the divine nature and the nature of human existence. In the same vein, Barth accused Schleiermacher of accommodating the Word of God to worldly wisdom and turning theology into anthropology which placed the focus not on revelation but on human religiousness.⁷² Interestingly enough, at the same time Barth asked if a theology of experience could not also be a theology of the Holy Spirit, thus making it a theology of faith.

Whether or not such a supposition answers the criticism, the risk is probably inevitable, for no alternative to some appeal to experience suggests itself in the present day. At the same time, a diligent church will certainly speak, as Schleiermacher himself intended, of the objective grounds of faith.⁷³ Whether even this can appease the criticism that Schleiermacher reduces Christianity to one modification of religion from among many, and so condemns Christianity, is uncertain, especially in a time so sensitive to pluralism. The integrity of the church's theology and, in the author's opinion, the seriousness of its christology will largely determine the answer to the charge in the immediate future. A theology from below at least has this advantage: it can begin to speak the language of religion to those who find a theology from above unintelligible or unnecessary in light of a secular orientation.

As is apparent, religion for Schleiermacher has its genesis not in a conceptual knowledge or ideas about God but in the "universal problematic" of human existence.⁷⁴ The sheer givenness of both the self and the world becomes a mystery and prompts the question of from Whence⁷⁵ does all that is contingent arise. Persons do have creative capacity, but they do not create themselves or the world. Sensing that another transcendent power is responsible for this mystery of existence creates a feeling of dependence, or in Schleiermacher's famous phrase, a feeling of absolute dependence. The consciousness of absolute dependence is given the name "religion" i.e., when one experiences the sheer givenness of the self as the fundamental reality of the human situation and therefore becomes aware of dependence on the Source of all things,

that person is "being religious." Religion, in short, first appears not with the advent of metaphysical constructs but in the self-conscious realization (or feeling) that existence at all demands a Whence from which existence itself derives, upon which it is dependent, and of which it is conscious through feeling.⁷⁶

Locating the essence of religion in the experience of the Whence of human existence, not in speculation or other knowledge, reflects Schleiermacher's dissatisfaction with sterile rationalism.⁷⁷ (It also shows his rejection of Enlightenment theology in its supernaturalistic form.)⁷⁸ In his own time, Schleiermacher identified this tendency to equate religion with knowledge (or a religious faculty capable of knowledge of God)⁷⁹ as part of the crisis of religion; the point has much validity in the present, for the contradictions, inconsistencies, and outright errors of religious systems confuse the religious spark, perhaps even extinguishing it altogether. At the same time, he dismisses another misconception, namely, the tendency to identify religion with moral achievement, for it is entirely possible to lead an exemplary moral life without any religious sanction. The point is well taken today, for in the name of religion (even the same religion), contradictory moral positions abound, and without any religious banner whatsoever, strong moral positions find ready advocates.

Schleiermacher certainly does not preclude knowing and doing (see Christian Faith, #3) from the religious life, but the feeling of absolute dependence is prior because it represents a deeper level of selfhood and from that deeper level comes to rest in the thinking and

the doing.⁸⁰ It is worth noting that as a consequence, religion for Schleiermacher is receptive and passive, not productive.⁸¹

For all its importance, the phrase, the feeling of absolute dependence, has itself caused much confusion among those who would understand Schleiermacher. Because "feeling" suggests emotion, one might falsely conclude that religion is first and foremost emotionality.⁸² Schleiermacher himself spoke in the Speeches of a "sense and taste for the Infinite."⁸³ The concepts might also be understood as simple or sheer dependence or even simple causality in the sense that one exists in integral relation with another Being the power of which posited the world.⁸⁴ The feeling of absolute dependence is in and of itself God's co-presence in self-consciousness.⁸⁵ Perhaps clearest of all in the present day is to substitute selfhood for self-consciousness such that one's selfhood centers in the feeling of absolute dependence which relates him beyond the world.⁸⁶

Schleiermacher himself differentiated grades of self-consciousness (Christian Faith, #5): animal consciousness (although the word scarcely applies), sensible self-consciousness (or world awareness as mediated by the senses and unified in a feeling of dependence), and immediate self-consciousness or the feeling of absolute dependence (which includes world-consciousness and God-consciousness). When speaking of the self other than in its knowing and doing, when it is in the mode of immediate self-consciousness, when the world-consciousness finds its unity with and in God-consciousness, then does the self experience a feeling of absolute dependence and in this does religion have its birth. The point is that the feeling of absolute dependence occurs at a level higher than

self-consciousness, i.e., in immediate self-consciousness or in the immediate presence of the whole undivided existence.⁸⁷ Note the accent on the unified self. In reciprocity with the world, the self experiences relative freedom and dependence; the self acts upon the world and changes it and (willingly or otherwise) is receptive to and dependent upon the way the world acts upon it. A sense of unqualified dependence unifies relative freedom and dependence.⁸⁸

Schleiermacher does make clear what has to this point only been assumed, namely, that the feeling of absolute dependence places one in relation with God (Christian Faith, #4). That on which the self feels itself absolutely dependent is that which determines the self which is God. In short, all people are not only religious, they have a common consciousness of God and are related to God.⁸⁹ Along with the feeling of absolute dependence there is given the immediate self-consciousness of it or a consciousness of God.⁹⁰

It is not within the province of this paper to give a complete summary of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God. Several points, however, should be mentioned. First, when so much of science and philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries was arrayed against any concept of God, it was certainly no small achievement that Schleiermacher could "relocate" God language in human experience. In fact, it is one of Schleiermacher's greatest and continuing accomplishments to describe how scientific thought does not need to damage a concept of God (or better, God-consciousness); for the scientific method certainly did cast doubt on the supernaturalistic notion of the God who invades the world from the outside—but only in violation of the scientifically-understood laws

of nature.⁹¹ For Schleiermacher, though, religion, and therefore a relation with God, has less to do with human knowing and more to do with the experience of that being on whom God and the world converge and find their unity.⁹² God is that unity which upholds all the particulars, the totality that encompasses the sensible world in all its multiplicity and diversity,⁹³ the universe which elicits the pious feeling of mystery.

Secondly, since God creates and preserves the world, the world is obviously dependent on God (Christian Faith, #38). In persons, this feeling of dependence is also understood to include absolute divine causality (Christian Faith, #50.3).⁹⁴ God's causality is differentiated from that of the natural order—and yet encompasses it, i.e., God causes everything, including evil, death, and finitude. All causality (moments of pleasure and pain alike) is the vehicle by which God-consciousness may continuously be stimulated.⁹⁵

This especially means that God does not act in the gaps of the causal nexus of nature. For that matter, there are no "acts of God" as such, for God is not relegated to the status of one agent among many. Schleiermacher does speak of the divine activity which pervades the world and gives meaning and purpose to nature and history (namely, by raising humanity to a higher level of consciousness). Each natural event is an act of God in that it is grounded in the eternal activity of God.⁹⁶ Further, there are no miracles; in the Speeches, Schleiermacher speaks of miracles as the "religious name for event"; i.e., all events are miracles if faith experiences them as acts of God (or signs of God's pervasive activity) and not as magical or mythological.⁹⁷ The "absolute miracle" is redemption in Christ (Christian Faith, #105).

It would almost seem, and he has been criticized at this point,⁹⁸ that Schleiermacher sacrifices the personal dimension in God. Schleiermacher did prefer to speak of the "living God" which avoided what he saw as the limitations to personality (namely, that it draws God into the domain of the finite acting as one person among many persons). Once God becomes one cause among many causes, God can no longer be the cause of all things. In the end, Schleiermacher notes that God is not to be confused with ideas about God, for ideas may be abstract and religiously empty.

There is no question, though, that God is love, the sign of which is given in Christ. This is important because omnipotence, especially if divorced from a strong sense of the personal, may seem incompatible with love. It may well be that Schleiermacher reconstructs omnipotence⁹⁹ to embrace ethically ordered and motivated power. (This gives the sovereign God a reason to be worshipped.) If so, the intentionality of God's power focuses all God's causality on the good, at least ultimately, for humanity.

Most of his life, Schleiermacher faced the charge that he was a¹⁰⁰ pantheist, i.e., that God and the world are one entity. The charge was unfounded, principally because all finite being, including the world, depends absolutely on God. He not only distinguishes God and the world (Christian Faith, #28.1), but he further distinguishes God and history (Speeches), and obviously he stressed repentance and the longing for reconciliation on the part of humanity.

For the purposes of this project, several far-reaching implications emerge from this review of Schleiermacher's understanding of religion.

For one, a modern, secular mentality cannot eliminate religion or religious consciousness from the question of human existence. For religious consciousness defines in large part the meaning of personhood itself! In a given individual or even whole societies, the religious sensitivity may indeed glow dimly, but that says more about the church and its ministry than about the impossibility or the difficulty of holding to religious truth in the present day. Secondly, if religious consciousness appears to be on the defensive in the present time (as statistics at least suggest), then it would follow that the communion called church might best reflect on its own self-understanding in a new age. As the next chapter will show, this is primarily a theological task, with a special emphasis on christology, the goal of which is to enable the community to address the spirit of the new age.

NOTES: CHAPTER 2

- 1
Christian, 19.
- 2
Andrew R. Osborn, Schleiermacher and Religious Education (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1934), 13.
- 3
Christian, 19ff., 43, 88f. Christian cites secularism, science, and optimism as three characteristics of the new age. The 20th century has cast serious doubts on the last, but the other two still challenge the church today.
- 4
As will be discussed, Schleiermacher's facing of the pluralistic challenge is an especially pertinent contribution in the present day.
- 5
Christian, 22.
- 6
Christian, 23; Osborn, 2f.
- 7
Redeker, 2.
- 8
Gerrish, Prince, 24f. Cf. Christian, 33ff.; Redeker, 7ff. All biographies stress the importance of the Moravian experience on Schleiermacher's religious outlook.
- 9
Redeker, 10.
- 10
Osborn, 1f.
- 11
Cf. Redeker, 9. In Gerrish's terms, what Schleiermacher lost in his early denials of the Moravians was not his faith but his first understanding of the faith (Prince, 26).
- 12
Redeker, 12.

13
Christian, 33.

14
Redeker, 16f.

15
Redeker, 18f.

16
Christian, 34.

17
Gerrish, Prince, 15. The shortened title, Speeches, is used hereafter.

18
Summarized from a lecture by Jack Verheyden, Professor of Theology, School of Theology at Claremont, California, September 9, 1983. Cf. also Christian, 37, and Osborn, 13f. As Williams notes, the notion that metaphysics and theology are transcendent to sensible experience and therefore can be thought but not known created a dualism between reality and nonreality, where reality comes from the scientifically known; cf. Robert R. Williams, Schleiermacher the Theologian (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 2f.

19
The term "metaphysical agnosticism" is Christian's, 37. Cf. Christian's arguments for a fuller treatment of the theme of the "new realism" in Schleiermacher's attempt to transcend Kant's skepticism.

20
Defined by Christian, 45f.

21
Christian points specifically to a shallow and superficial natural religion, the consequence of the Enlightenment, and the empty utilitarianism that was its practical expression, 45ff. For the purposes of this paper, inadequate religion takes many forms, most of which stumble on the lack of experience and an unconvincing conceptual framework. The importance of experience as a starting point in the religious quest will be considered later in this chapter.

22
By locating romanticism as a poetic and philosophical movement within German idealism, Redeker counters the pejorative attitude that romanticism is an irrational, aesthetic subjectivism and artificial sentimentality (Life and Thought, 30f.)

23
Christian, 38-39. Cf. also Redeker, 33, 60f., for a discussion of Schleiermacher's use of romantic language.

24

B. A. Gerrish, Tradition and the Modern World (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), 18.

25

For a summary of the critics' response and the judgement that Schleiermacher was not a romantic, see Redeker, 30f., 63. As his biographer put it, to the challenge of a new age, Schleiermacher found a conceptual tool in objective idealism, modified by his study of Kant and the Christian understanding of revelation, to express his praise of the glory of God in Christ (Redeker, 3).

26

Redeker, 74. Schleiermacher worked on his Plato translation and published Outlines of a Critique of Previous Ethical Theories, 1803.

27

Christian, 35. Christmas Eve will be considered in Chapter 4. Redeker defines dialectics as the teaching of the principles of the art of philosophical thinking; Schleiermacher's philosophical system is difficult to assess because only lecture and student notes have survived, not a single published work. Redeker locates Schleiermacher's systematics within the critical transcendental philosophy of Kant which took shape under the influence of Plato; cf. Redeker, 151ff.

28

Redeker, 77f.

29

Redeker, 6.

30

Cf. Gerrish, Tradition, 29f., and Williams, 14. Gerrish especially underscores the influence of speculative philosophy in setting the context out of which the dogmatics appears. The influence of the romantic literary circle of cultured society has already been noted. Cf. Redeker, 27, who also adds Goethe to the list. Obviously, liberal Protestantism traces its roots to pietism, the Enlightenment, and idealism (Redeker, 2). In the matter of idealism and God, Redeker, 38, describes idealistic philosophy as seeking the infinite or the ultimate which is no longer accessible to objective knowledge; God represents the absolute, the totality, or the final unity.

31

Osborn, 14f.

32

Gerrish, Tradition, 32, 47.

33

In Christian's terms, Schleiermacher accepted the experiential or existential character of theology, thereby rejecting a "received

theology" (Christian, 141). It is the accent on the experience that is of prime importance. While the mere hint is given here, recognizing the primacy of experience to doctrine is essential to the renewal of the contemporary church as well.

34

Richard R. Niebuhr, Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion (New York: Scribner's, 1964), 133. (On Christ is used hereafter.)

35

Redeker, 87ff. Redeker is careful to note that the nationalistic interest of Schleiermacher is not the secularized version of the 20th century which substitutes the state for a lost Christian commitment. The state is not absolutized in Schleiermacher.

36

Redeker, 211f.

37

See Gerrish, Tradition, 16ff. Gerrish argues that while his Reformed identity was obscure up to Halle (1804) and even into the Berlin period, Schleiermacher did frequently profess his loyalty to the Reformed School. Brunner's charge in 1924 that Schleiermacher was a mystic, and thus no Christian at all, is also discussed in Tradition, 22ff. The issue probably has no clear resolution. Apparently, Schleiermacher applied the term to himself (Osborn, 53; Redeker, 40), at least in so far as he discarded sense perception in order to experience the more mysterious internal aspirations and intuitions, i.e., mysticism referred to the immediacy of the experience of God. However, because he did not dissolve the distinction between the self and God and did acknowledge the need for redemption, Schleiermacher is not considered a mystic (Redeker, 41ff.) Suffice to say here that Schleiermacher's personal commitment to and the continuing validity of his formulation of the Christian faith is not an issue. Niebuhr credits Schleiermacher with breaking the stalemate of rationalism and orthodoxy at the beginning of the 19th century and setting the mind of the Protestant church free (Niebuhr, On Christ, 6f.)

38

Gerrish, Prince, 13. Cf. also Christian, 138. The consciousness of a dynamic, changing world also suggests that theology is dynamic. In fact, as a closer discussion of the function of theology will show, the tradition handed on is to serve the needs of the generation at that moment. In that those needs change, the tradition cannot be static but will inevitably grow and change as well.

39

Gerrish, Prince, 32.

40

Quoted by Gerhard Ebeling, "Schleiermacher's Doctrine of the Divine Attributes", Schleiermacher As Contemporary, ed. R.W. Funk (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 128.

41

The term in the present case belongs to William Hordern, ed., Introduction, vol. 1 of New Directions in Theology Today (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 19. In the context of its time, the "post-Christian" church, having found itself in a world "come of age", would of necessity seek to find a secular language if it had any hope of addressing a people for whom God-talk was irrelevant. As used here, "post-Christian" also refers to a culture that bears the marks of Christian influence but without its foundation; i.e., the church remains, along with its ethics and mores, but the religious substance has dissipated. See Jerald C. Brauer, "Secularism", Handbook of Christian Theology, eds. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (Cleveland: World, 1968), 340. See also note 58, this chapter.

42

William Baird, The Corinthian Church (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 17.

43

Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World. (New York: Crossroad, 1981), Chapter 1 and frequently.

44

Cf., for example, Raimundo Pannikar, Blessed Simplicity (New York: Seabury, 1982), 106, who argues that western social systems seem to be collapsing because they are unjust and beyond the possibility of reformation. For him the spiritual crisis (although he does not use that term) afflicting western culture stems from the failure of the culture to look at the global human predicament from something more universal than the culture itself. This will be seen as the problem of secularism in western society.

45

Gwen Kennedy Neville and John Westerhoff, Learning Through Liturgy (New York: Seabury, 1978), 107. Westerhoff ties this to a forgotten or lost ability to experience God (see Chapter 5 of this project.)

46

Quoted by Gerrish, Tradition, 28 (emphasis added). Oddly enough, the "unspiritual pseudo-Christianity of our modern theology and religion" (albeit written in 1924 though still pertinent today) would seem rather to lend itself to Schleiermacher's perspective, i.e., rather than being part of the problem, Schleiermacher is part of the solution. See especially the next chapter.

47

Ebeling, 127, identifies this "breaking thunderstorm" with Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, thus extending the crisis of spirit to a point much earlier than the transitional years of the mid- and late-20th century and the dawn of the post-modern period itself.

48

This is the language of the "death of God" theology. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, Christian Spirituality (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 76ff., where Pannenberg summarizes the work of Gabriel Vahanian, "father of the death of God" theology. Vahanian identifies an unbridgeable tension between the anthropocentric mentality of secular humanity (which makes the human being a creature of modern science and technology) and the theocentric focus of Christianity. His point is not to deny the Christian proclamation but to recognize and enter into the anthropological foundation of modern cultural consciousness as the basis for maintaining a Christian proclamation in the modern era.

49

Michael Galligan, God and Evil (New York: Paulist, 1976), 3.

50

See Christian, 65ff., 87ff. Also Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, eds. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1928), #7-10.

51

Schleiermacher's rationale in developing a pyramid of religions lies beyond the purposes of this paper. The point here is simply that pluralism need not threaten the religious life, a note which apparently needs sounding in the present day. As for the distinction between higher and lower religious forms, choosing from among the available options is inevitable; indeed, religion should help one choose the more helpful from the less helpful, the true from the false. As will be seen, Schleiermacher's christology is helpful in this regard (see Chapter 3), and from that vantage point, one might well argue for the superiority of Christianity.

52

For the components, see Pannenberg, 73. Cf. also Pannikar, 59, who points out that the priestly term "profane," not "secular," stands in opposition to the "sacred." This is not to gloss over the sacred/church-secular/world duality that dates to the ancient church. In that tension, secularism attempts to liberate certain (if not all) facets of life from an authoritative church (all authority actually); the church tried to maintain that all facets of life were responsible to God. Ambiguity for the church was the only result! The current use of the term hopefully avoids that dilemma. See Brauer, 339, 341f. If anything, the "secular" stands in contrast to the "spiritual".

53

Brauer, 340; Pannikar, 60.

54

Brauer, 340; Neville and Westerhoff, 118.

55

Pannenberg, 71. Pannenberg also speaks of the "secularist emancipation of everyday life from God" (p. 26). The "secular Christianity" of Bonhoeffer or Harvey Cox's process of secularization which delivers society from ecclesiastical control and metaphysical views represent ways to maintain some minimal level of God-language—at least for theologians. The supernatural is replaced with the social-political and God's people, the church, do God's work in the world without much reference to a metaphysical God. (See Hordern, 234f.). In general, a secular culture unaccustomed to the subtleties of the theological enterprise would seldom experience even a secular God.

56

James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 13.

57

For a positive evaluation, see Harry Ausmus, On the Myth of Secularization (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1982), 3-4. The Evolutionary (positive) view is countered by the Devolution viewpoint which sees in the last four hundred years a history of dissolution leading perhaps to the disintegration of western civilization.

58

See Pannenberg, 88ff., who maintains specifically that a secular culture will not put an end to Christianity. Is a "post-Christian" world accordingly an impossibility? Perhaps, although a Christianity that does emerge in a post-modern age will of necessity shed any accumulated language and traditions that obstruct its addressing the cultural mindset of the time. This view does suggest, of course, that the survival of the form of Christianity without its substance (see note 41 above) is unlikely. If so, the term "post-Christian" may have provisional validity, referring only to the church carried forward by its institutional momentum long after its substance has dissipated (in some sense the state of contemporary Protestantism). The church that emerges within, and as a response to, the secularity of a post-modern world could not accurately be called "post-Christian" because it will have reformulated its self-understanding and mission as the condition of its continual existence at all. Such a church will simply be the Christian church.

59

Pannenberg focuses heavily on the lack of personal identity as a consequence of secularization and the absence of God. The somewhat more general view will be adopted here that an undeveloped spirituality results in feelings of meaninglessness, alienation, despair, and the

other signs of personal and social breakdown along with the lack of self-identity. These elements are, of course, interrelated.

60

John Westerhoff and O.C. Edwards, Jr., A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis (Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981), 295f. The optimism of the sentiment should not cloud the difficulty of developing a "new spirituality."

61

The image belongs to Mary Elizabeth Moore, Associate Professor of Christian Education and Theology, in "Wesleyan Spirituality: Meeting Contemporary Movements", School of Theology at Claremont Bulletin, Dec. 1984: 1. Moore identifies five currents in contemporary spirituality: (1) spirituality as response to life, a wholistic approach combining the spiritual and the physical; (2) spirituality that sees life as interconnected and accordingly seeks to overcome the divisions of life (East-West, individual-social, e.g.) and embrace the whole of creation; (3) spirituality as social, which recognizes that a relationship with God is inseparable from a relationship with society and culture; (4) spirituality as response to the poor, which recognizes Jesus' bias for the poor; and (5) spirituality as prayer and contemplation which expresses itself in concrete action. The renewal of interest in liturgics, particularly the eucharist, could be mentioned here as well as a highly meaningful form of spirituality.

62

The definition of spirituality was used by Mary Elizabeth Moore during a lecture at the School of Theology at Claremont for her course "Seminar in Christian Spirituality", Spring, 1985.

63

The model presented here basically follows a New Testament understanding of Spirit. Except where noted, the conclusions are the author's, although the technical data comes from an unpublished word study on the Spirit. Attention is directed principally to the appropriate sections of Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Scribner's, 1951); E.D. Burton, New Testament Word Studies (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1927); and Hans Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

64

This corresponds to Schleiermacher's view that all people are inherently religious.

65

Mary Elizabeth Moore; cf. note 62 above.

66

The implications of this far-reaching statement for Schleiermacher will be explored in Chapters 3 and 5.

67

Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #66. See Chapter 3 for further discussion.

68

Aylward Shorter, ed., African Christian Spirituality (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 4f. Emphasis added.

69

Many commentators discuss the primacy of experience. See, for example, Christian, 28; Gerrish, Prince, 44; Redeker, 40.

70

Christian, 58; Niebuhr, On Christ, 174f.; Redeker, 36, 206f. See especially Christian Faith, #3 and 4, #33, where Schleiermacher says that the feeling of absolute dependence replaces proofs of God's existence. (On the problem of proofs, see note 78). It is interesting to note that Pannikar develops a parallel concept in his "monastic archetype", a universal human dimension (of which the monk is but one expression) through which the search for perfection or fulfillment goes forth; see Blessed Simplicity, x.

71

For example, see Vernard Eller, Towering Babbble (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1983) 26ff. Bouyer takes it even further and says that when subjective experience takes precedence over objective, transcendent revelation, religion "vapourizes" into vaguely pantheistic experience. More kindly, religious experience may result in a religiosity without anything specifically Christian. See Louis Bouyer, Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality (New York: Seabury, 1982), 59f.

72

Gerrish, Prince, 22.

73

Christian, 47. Theology is a tool for molding religious experience.

74

Niebuhr, On Christ, 180. It might be noted in this context that Schleiermacher uses "religion", "piety", and "faith" almost indifferently; see Richard R. Niebuhr, "Schleiermacher and the Names of God: A Consideration of Schleiermacher in Relation to Our Theisms", Schleiermacher as Contemporary, ed. R.W. Funk (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 180. (Hereafter cited as Names of God.)

75

Niebuhr, On Christ, 184; Williams, 36. Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #4.3 and below. Freedom does exist in human experience but within limits. Persons act upon the world and the world (meaning the community and its social and natural orders) acts upon and shapes persons. Activity is countered by passivity, freedom by determinism. Self-originating acts fall short of self-creation, though, and the givenness of existence implies human dependence on something that in turn is not dependent on the human, the realization of which becomes the locus of true religion. See Christian, 49f., 81; Niebuhr, On Christ, 122; Williams 35; Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #4.1. Cf. notes 84 and 88.

76

Niebuhr, On Christ, 184, 189, 195. Cf. Williams 34. Feeling in general is the medium of access to many different objects, both mundane and divine; religion is not feeling as such but a special modification of feeling, namely, the feeling of absolute dependence.

77

The Moravian influence also plays an important role here. See Christian, 55; Redeker, 113f.

78

Redeker, 59. For a discussion on the differences between Schleiermacher and the abstract, Enlightenment metaphysics, see Redeker, 119f., 149f. In a similar vein, Schleiermacher rejected a natural religion, in part because the final revelation is in the Redeemer (Redeker, 49, 123; Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #6). Again, it might be noted that the feeling of absolute dependence takes the place of proofs for Schleiermacher. For even if the necessity of God's existence is demonstrated metaphysically, the knowledge is abstract and is not found within experience. The idea of God involves a real apprehension, not an abstract inference. In effect, the feeling suffices for proofs of God's existence since there must be some agreement between the experience of the world and the reality behind it. See Christian, 82; Gerrish, Tradition, 37; Williams, 43, 47, 50.

79

Christian, 51, 53.

80

Gerrish talks about intuitive piety and reflective belief, feeling and intellect, as correlating (Prince, 32). The infinite appears in specific kinds of feelings in a being, or agent, capable of thinking and doing (Niebuhr, On Christ, 123 and Names of God, 181.) But feeling unifies the knowing and doing. Cf. also Schleiermacher, Speeches, No. 2.

81

Christian, 57; Redeker, 80.

82

Cf. Williams, 23ff., who indicates that the feeling of absolute dependence is not to be equated with a psychological state, bare sensation or sense-data empiricism, and experience less the intellectual-conceptualization component. This is not to deny an emotional component to religion, e.g., the joy that comes in the unity of existence (see notes 85 and 87).

83

See Niebuhr, Names of God, 181f. This in turn invokes a passion on the part of a being who seeks to understand the presence of the Infinite in the finite.

84

Niebuhr, Names of God, 183, 186f. Williams speaks of utter dependence (p. 23, 34, et. al.). Niebuhr also defines the feeling of absolute dependence as the absolutely original having-been-posited-in-a-particular-way to which there is no responding freedom (On Christ, 122); cf. notes 75 and 88.

85

Redeker, 42. Redeker draws attention to the shift in Schleiermacher's own thinking between the time he wrote the Speeches and Christian Faith. Specifically, the feeling-as-intuition became feeling-as-unity (or totality). One experiences his being as being in God who lives and acts within the person. The person is posited and affected by the actions of the universe; he experiences his self as a whole and as finite givenness (p. 80). Williams writes in much the same vein (e.g., p. 25f.) Cf. also notes 82 and 87.

86

Jack C. Verheyden, Professor of Theology at the School of Theology at Claremont, in a personal conversation.

87

Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #3.2, and notes 82 and 85. Henrich Steffen as quoted by Ebeling, 146. Awareness of sheer dependence unifies personal existence, sensible as well as spiritual (Niebuhr, On Christ, 182f.). This theme of a unified self should not be minimized, especially in light of modern-day fragmentation in human experience, both at the individual and the cultural level. Verheyden identifies a felt unity as one of the structures of immediate self-consciousness; in fact, only in the unity of self-consciousness (which is "felt", not conceived) can one "see" or think about God at all. See Jack C. Verheyden, Introduction to The Life of Jesus, by Friedrich Schleiermacher (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), xxxviii. For further discussion, see Christian, 80f.; Niebuhr, On Christ, 123f., 235.

88

Cf. Note 75. There the point was non-reciprocal dependency between the creature and the Creator; here the point is the unity of relative freedom and dependency as the outcome of the feeling of

absolute dependence. Niebuhr observes that in the reciprocity of determination and freedom is ethics born (On Christ, 112ff.)

89

In a letter to Lucke, Schleiermacher spoke of the relationship with God as an "immediate existential relation." Schleiermacher now calls the God-relation God-consciousness. Redeker, 114; Gerrish, 54; Williams, 44.

90

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #4.4. Verheyden, xxxviii. Schleiermacher used other names to express this "objective determinant of religion": Infinite, World-Soul, All, and Universum (Niebuhr, Names of God, 182).

91

Gerrish, Prince, 58ff.

92

Niebuhr, On Christ, 194.

93

Redeker, 36ff.

94

Ebeling, 132, 141; Christian, 100f.

95

Redeker, 119f., 169; Niebuhr, On Christ, 244.

96

Gerrish, 64ff.

97

Redeker, 123ff.

98

For this paragraph, see Christian, 61ff.; Gerrish, Prince, 63f.; Niebuhr, On Christ, 16.

99

Williams, 15. See Christian Faith, #167, where Schleiermacher equates the attributes of love with the nature of God (Ebeling, 159f.; Christian, 136).

100

The charge stemmed from his friendship with Spinoza. For the argument against any pantheistic leanings, see Niebuhr, On Christ, 190f.; Names of God, 197ff.; Redeker, 43. Niebuhr's article is also important in discussing Schleiermacher's theism in relation to deism, thanatheim, and panentheism; arguing that Schleiermacher is none of

these, he nonetheless concludes that Schleiermacher is not a conventional theist either (Names of God, 196ff.)!

CHAPTER 3

Christ the Redeemer

The Function of Theology

Recovering and developing a sense of the spirit in the church is largely a christological task. In that christology also involves the artistry of the theologian, the spiritual renewal of the church is necessarily a theological task as well. However, because he began with religious piety, specifically the feeling of absolute dependence, Schleiermacher's view of the function of theology took a dramatic turn from the usual and customary understanding theologians generally had of their craft. Traditionally, theological doctrine developed from some speculative metaphysical principles or from a source vested with authority (the Bible, for example, or the church.) Predictably, the result was an abstraction which had the unfortunate consequence of separating "God" from his actual manifestation in religious consciousness. Reduced to creeds or systematic statements of faith, these abstract constructs were learned by rote, but unless they found common ground within the believer's personal experience, such a "received theology" would have limited power in shaping and guiding the spiritual life. One of Schleiermacher's principal contributions to the church was his correction of the abstract mode of theology.¹

In Schleiermacher's understanding, piety or God-consciousness established a relationship with God that was given in feeling. It

followed that doctrine should begin with and reflect upon an already-existing religious consciousness and its object, "God" who already was experienced in the feeling of absolute dependence. In this sense, theology for Schleiermacher is empirical, not speculative, and has its grounding in the phenomenon of real, living religion.² This differs radically from traditional theology which preceded piety and was in some measure to create the experience of that which is described. Schleiermacher reversed the order and made theology the servant of an experienced piety. Doctrine is not the essence of religion but it does express in speech Christian religious affections. It systematizes and describes for the believer the meaning of Christ and Christianity. Indeed, there would be no Christian religious self-consciousness apart from the communicability of Jesus' self-consciousness by means of speech;³ but always this theological enterprise makes sense only when it arises out of spontaneous piety.⁴

Theology serves the same function for the church as a whole, i.e.,⁵ it is the critical self-reflection of the church on its own nature. Further, as with the individual, so with the church: theology can only seek to understand and externalize an already-present piety. Individually and corporately, then, theology reflects upon and clarifies believing experience.⁶

Theology-as-servant has a very practical focus, namely, the intellectual preparation of leadership for the church.⁷ Words and deeds together provide the means of communicating to the church the nature of its faith and the scope of its task. In a word, theology focuses on the practical function of ministry;⁸ in the hands of the church's leaders,

that practical function of theology has been defined not as a matter of seeing some special realities but as seeing ordinary reality differently.⁹

As the servant of the church, doctrine is fluid. Theology never gives absolute knowledge but only systematizes the knowledge of the church at a given time.¹⁰ Because the church changes and undergoes new experiences, the dogmatic expressions of the Christian's state of mind must necessarily change as well; in effect, since the church is a living community, the church's theological self-understanding is always becoming; its present is both the fruit of the past and the seed of the future.¹¹ Undoubtedly, this sounded as revolutionary in Schleiermacher's day as in the present, for it suggests that in the dialectic between the historical manifestation of Christianity and the evolving consciousness of true Christianity, some of the church's doctrines may no longer pass as fit vehicles of the faith.¹² Revolutionary or not, it takes the process of historical change very seriously. Indeed, because of change, genuine theology is possible at all!¹³ Because theology is possible, Christian religious consciousness can develop in any age.

The Problem of Sin

The Enlightenment had little regard for the concept of sin, having substituted in its place an optimistic belief in future progress.¹⁴ Although few today place much confidence in humanity's ability to create the better future envisioned in the Enlightenment (and by liberals in the early years of the 20th century as well), the concept of sin receives little serious attention in mainstream Protestantism and

15

certainly among the unchurched. At least in the present day, this oversight carries serious consequences, for the power of sin (and, as will be seen, missing thereby the need for redemption) lies at the root of the contemporary spiritual crisis. In both periods, dismissing sin as descriptive of the human condition stems more from inadequate theology than an alleged sophistication which goes beyond an archaic notion of inherent sinfulness.

In part, the Enlightenment reacted against the doctrine of Original Sin which it considered absurd; for that matter, Schleiermacher himself departed from the traditional teaching of the church. The first three chapters of Genesis, for example, were not to be understood literally; rather, those chapters were religious documents, not science, and as such they describe humanity's relation with God. Adam was not an individual who plunged the whole of the human race into sin, for such a feat as altering the very nature of human existence itself would have given Adam monstrous powers, and ascribing such power to the first person is hardly consistent with the scientific perspective which understands the primitive forms of human life as emerging from lower animal life. Instead, Adam and Eve represent every individual, for sinfulness is a universal problem; in Schleiermacher, the "original sin" of Adam and Eve binds all persons together in a solidarity of sinfulness where sin becomes a contagious power moving from generation to generation. Having both personal and social contexts, sin is affirmed and passed on from age to age.

Instead of the Garden as a time of original blessedness destroyed forever by the corruptness of Adam and all subsequent generations "in

Adam," Schleiermacher speaks of "original perfection" which he defines as the predisposition to God-consciousness, an understanding that distinctly allows the concepts of sin and perfection to co-exist in the same person, or more accurately, in each person.¹⁹

Unlike the Enlightenment, Schleiermacher takes the concept of sin very seriously. Then, as now, experience did not confirm the optimistic confidence in the power of the human creature to strive for the greater good. At the same time, though, Schleiermacher avoids an understanding of sin that so many have found so offensive, namely, as that hostile, rebellious disobedience against God which judges the human creature "totally depraved." Instead, Schleiermacher describes sin in more descriptive terms as the process which confuses God-consciousness.²⁰ Sin is a disorder of the whole, a disruption of the unity perceived in the feeling of absolute dependence, whereby the self seeks to establish itself on its own terms.²¹ In the perversions of God-consciousness, an antagonism develops between the flesh and the spirit (after the manner of Romans 7) where the flesh represents the sensible self- or world-consciousness (or more simply the whole person). The activity of the flesh stifles or arrests the capacity for God-consciousness.²²

Sin is descriptive of the incompleteness of creation and the frustration of the developing potentialities that otherwise are ordered in God-consciousness. In that confused state, the self becomes aware of pain and misery, what Schleiermacher called the privation of blessedness.²³ In a word, sin hurts because along with the experience of God in the feeling of absolute dependence there is an accompanying sense of alienation or guilt.²⁴ As will be seen, this "feeling" finds its place in the process of redemption, for though sin carries with it

the discomfort of alienation, the predisposition toward sinning, an "incapacity for the good" endemic to the human condition, requires something more than social engineering or a readjustment of the psychological processes of the mind.²⁵ The powerlessness of the God-consciousness needs, in a word, a Redeemer.

Schleiermacher's concept of sin seems especially well-suited for the present day, for it takes seriously an inescapable aspect of human experience, i.e., the distortion of God-relatedness; at the same time, it maintains its descriptive capabilities without resorting to an original act of rebellion which gave to a single person the superhuman power to distort the nature of the universe itself and which demands mythical support not easily reconciled with a scientific and to a significant degree a secular outlook.²⁶

Still, such a shift in viewpoint raises a troubling question, namely, that if the world was created so imperfectly, to what assurances can the creation look to affirm God's power to bring creation to perfection? If God can fulfill his purposes for the created order, why has he not manifested his power from the start?²⁷ Schleiermacher had no interest in the kind of world God might have made; the account in Genesis pronounced the world "good", which for Schleiermacher meant "good enough."²⁸ Given his experiential orientation, the world as constituted provides the necessary stimuli to develop God-consciousness, and any concept of perfection refers not to a "perfect world" at the end of a developmental process but to the presence of a continuity of God-consciousness in the human person.²⁹ This means that even evil can operate in sensible self-consciousness to promote dependence.³⁰ In that

sense evil serves a positive role in leading persons to authentic faith; like the good, it stimulates growth; struggle serves the overall development of the person.³¹

That God uses evil is ever problematical when speaking of a loving, powerful God, but Schleiermacher seems to accept the theodicy challenge in order to emphasize the far more significant goal of redemption, and there can be no consciousness of grace without a consciousness of sin.³²

Sin, and similarly evil, obstruct the development of God-consciousness and therefore need to be overcome in redemption. In that redemption is the fulfillment of God's omnipotent love, and since sin cannot overcome God's activity in creation and redemption, sin in the absolute sense is as nothing.³³

In the world, specifically in a given moment in a person's life, sin represents a stage to be overcome; it can hardly be called "nothing"! Though sin and evil appear as problematical in the moment, Schleiermacher suggests that these vehicles can awaken the religious sensitivity to the larger perspective of God's loving activity. In effect, their purpose is justified if a nebulous religious feeling (i.e., the feeling of absolute dependence) takes definitive shape in the picture of a loving God as represented in One whose God-consciousness was a veritable existence of God in him (Christian Faith, #94), the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Though the moment seems problematical for faith, Schleiermacher seems to maintain that the individual person must accept the order of creation, confidently trusting in this moment of the present government of God which also finds itself anticipating the ultimate triumph of God.³⁴ As will be seen, such trust itself requires the mind of Christ.

The Redeemer

Schleiermacher frequently faced the charge of promoting subjectivism which made the individual the measure of truth—or at least the truth that was validated in his or her own experience of religious consciousness.³⁵

In the sense that facts are mediated in experience, the charge had some foundation; but in the sense that the experience of dependence is not self-generated but comes from beyond itself as a gift, the charge is not wholly justified. That is, to talk of the feeling of absolute dependence is to posit a reality upon which dependence itself rests. "Truth" accordingly means the "truth of God." Further, it may be said that this subjective experience of God is shaped by its context, which for Schleiermacher obviously means Christian religious consciousness. This in turn brings the historic faith (the creeds and traditions of the church) and especially the Bible to bear upon the individual believer's experience. Experienced "truth," in other words, has ample opportunity to be shaped and tested. Taken together, the charge that Schleiermacher was a subjectivist mystic seems difficult to support.³⁶ This becomes especially evident in light of his christological understanding of Christ, the Redeemer, in whom and through whom proper God-consciousness comes.

For Schleiermacher, sin and redemption stand in tension with each other. Sin, the departure of the soul from God, is overcome by a divine reconciliation which itself suggests an original righteousness from which the self, in its sin, has departed; in that sense, sin and righteousness can be called "co-original."³⁷ It is important to recognize that with such an understanding of sin and (as will be seen

presently) reconciliation, the tension between the two will always exist as part of one's human nature. Sin may not triumph over the redeemed, but neither do the redeemed ever fully master their sin and reach a perfect God-consciousness. If Schleiermacher does depart from the language of judgment-forgiveness and sin-grace, which dates from the Reformation, in favor of a developmental scheme, he will perhaps find a willing audience in the post-modern world for whom sin and redemption are experienced together, in tension, if they are experienced at all, and for whom the struggle to master the one with the help of the other is at best only relatively successful.

Mention should be made at this point of the twin focus of Schleiermacher's theology, especially as presented in The Christian Faith. For Part 1 of that work describes a theology of universal God-consciousness; Part 2 describes a specifically Christian relation with Christ. Schleiermacher's theology is accordingly described not as a circle but as an ellipse with two foci, God and christology, the latter of which determines or shapes the awareness of the former as that universal ingredient of all human consciousness.³⁸ Christianity and all other religions share the propositions of Part 1 which describe general religious experience; Part 2 separates Christianity from other religions by describing that specific consciousness of a redemption in Jesus Christ.

The Christian Faith has been called the greatest systematic statement of Protestant theology since Calvin. If anything should have persuaded the critics of his allegiance to the faith and the church,³⁹ this work should have! But the critics have found the jump between

Part 1 and Part 2 problematical.⁴⁰ Actually, the tension can be seen as a progression from the abstract (Introduction) to the less abstract (Part 1) to the fully concrete (Part 2).⁴¹ For the purposes of this paper, it will suffice to note that Part 2 presupposes Part 1 and gives it a particular shape.

The essence of Christianity is given in Proposition 11 of The Christian Faith: Christianity is a monotheistic faith, belonging to the teleological type of religion, and is essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth. As already noted, redemption stands in relation to (or tension with) sin. If sin describes the distortion of God-consciousness, redemption describes its restoration (or at least its partial restoration). As the proposition itself indicates, the passage from one state to another requires a mediator, a Redeemer. Faith in Christ relates the state of redemption, as effect, to Christ as cause (Christian Faith, #14). Faith in the Redeemer answers the feeling of the need for redemption (experienced as the pain of sin, the darkness of disorder, or the distortion of the relationships with God, self, and world) with the assurance of Christ's redeeming power. Redemption accordingly orders (or begins to order) the disorder and confusion and the God-, world-, and self-relationships. In a word, redemption liberates for the higher life, but such liberation requires a causative power, identified in Christian faith as the Redeemer.⁴² So central is the theme of redemption to Christian consciousness that unless a dogma pertains to redemption, it is not essential to the faith.⁴³

Granted that sin adequately generates the felt need for redemption and that redemption at least begins the process of reordering the distorted relations of life, the question might still emerge as to why redemption should be accomplished with and in the person of Christ. Schleiermacher lets his favorite passage of Scripture (and the text of The Christian Faith answer: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among⁴⁴ us, full of grace and truth" (John 1.14a). As the incarnation of the Word, Jesus of Nazareth is the clue to what God is doing in humanity, the power of which is evident in his work as Redeemer.

Even that, of course, does not answer decisively the question, Why Jesus? Might there not be many "clues" to the divine intention? What does this "clue" do to set himself apart? In Schleiermacher's time, the matter of Jesus' person and work had become problematical. For one thing, the two-nature formula, long the orthodox teaching of the church, had been questioned and then discarded by the Enlightenment; for that⁴⁵ matter, Schleiermacher himself discarded that formula. Saying that Jesus has both a human and divine nature raised particular problems for those modern people shaped by Hume and Kant because in their thinking "nature" described the essence of an object. To possess two natures is really to describe a pathological condition or to use language which no⁴⁶ longer had any meaning. If Jesus, for example, has two natures, does he also have two wills? If so, how can he be one person? Or if he has one will, then one of the two natures must be incomplete. Stressing as Schleiermacher does the importance of experience, it can easily be seen as well that the two-nature formula would fail simply on its non-experiential quality.

Instead of Jesus' "nature(s)," Schleiermacher characterizes the uniqueness of Jesus in terms of the uninterrupted power of God-consciousness in him, a "veritable existence of God in him."⁴⁷ In normal humanity, world-consciousness collides with and overcomes God-consciousness. Not so with Jesus, for in him every moment is permeated by an awareness of God; as such it can be said that God dwells uniquely in Jesus, and in that sense it is still appropriate to speak of the divinity of Jesus without resorting to the language of a divine nature⁴⁸ joined to a human nature.

In the Enlightenment, and certainly in the present day as well, dismissing the two-nature formula ran the risk of reducing Jesus to the level of a good teacher or a powerful example and thereby precluding his work as Redeemer. Schleiermacher carefully incorporates other language to counteract any tendencies that would place Jesus on a mere continuum with other persons such that his God-consciousness is distinguished from others as a matter of mere quantity, i.e., in degree and not kind. For example, Schleiermacher refers to Jesus as an "archetype" who embodies⁴⁹ the idea of true humanity.⁵⁰ He founds a new community, the church.⁵¹ He is the second or last Adam who finishes the creation. Especially is Jesus the Mediator who unites finite humanity with God. No mere example, no moral teacher, no relatively greater person could contain the power to deliver the confused self-consciousness from its sinfulness, for that power originates from beyond the limits of human nature. Since the Mediator himself does not need mediation, he is more⁵² than finite.

The question, then, Why Jesus?, finds its answer in the absolute uniqueness of the God-consciousness that distinguished the historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth. But for Schleiermacher, and as hinted in the discussion to this point, one cannot talk about the historical Jesus of Nazareth apart from his work of redemption; for as Redeemer, Jesus, the Christ, brings his God-consciousness to bear upon the world by forming⁵³ and reforming the religious-consciousness of others.

As discussed above, implicit in the act of redemption is a (painful) consciousness of sin, or an awareness of a higher life beyond the reach of human nature which becomes all the more painful precisely because the sin-full cannot deliver themselves; sin demands grace; Pelagianism or any form of evolutionary self-salvation has no place in Schleiermacher's christology. If the unique God-consciousness of Jesus will become actual in persons, it will depend on the agency of Jesus as Christ (or for Schleiermacher, Jesus as Redeemer) to communicate his God-consciousness in such a way that the Christian appropriates it in his or her own life and is subsequently brought into a true or unified⁵⁴ relation with God, self, and the world.

Just how does Jesus redeem humanity? In the words of The Christian Faith (Proposition 100), "The Redeemer assumes believers into the power of His God-consciousness, and this is His redemptive activity." Since a relation to Christ is also a relation to God (Christian Faith, #32) the association or union with the Redeemer imparts true God-consciousness by⁵⁵ virtue of its power or potency in the Man from Nazareth.

Admittedly, this has a "mystical" ring to it.⁵⁶ The language speaks of the Redeemer as one who "enhances life" or who "liberates for

the higher life"; he comes as strength and power to help form and transform human self-consciousness.⁵⁷
⁵⁸ In the modern day at least, this may imply that redemption is a matter of psychological process. Such a conclusion, though, would miss the thrust of Schleiermacher's christology, for the work of the Redeemer brings a new situation into being in human self-consciousness; the faithful do not merely possess a new cognitive element in their self-consciousness but are in fact a new
⁵⁹ creation.

If Jesus, as the Redeemer, is something more than a hero and example (as the Enlightenment argued), he is also something other than the propitiation of human sin (as traditional Reformation theology argued).⁶⁰ For Schleiermacher, the idea of Jesus' vicarious suffering and death as a substitutionary payment that satisfied God's sense of justice seemed to contradict the idea of a God who moves through the world manifesting love; it struck him as a rather barbaric notion. Even more to the point, Schleiermacher found the notion of eternal punishment contrary to a loving God, and without eternal punishment, Christ's expiatory sacrifice was unnecessary. Even if there were, a substitutionary payment carried the implication that the people could have redeemed themselves if they had so chosen, a notion that could find no room in Schleiermacher's view on the crucial role played by the Redeemer. Since God was not changed by Christ's death, for there was no tarnished honor to restore, the cross, divested of its meaning as the place where the "price was paid", becomes instead a symbol of God's love and the utter dependence of the creature on the Creator.

Though it deviates from orthodox views, Schleiermacher's views on the Atonement may have more to say to the modern person than the traditional formula. Observers have noted that the idea of expiation has diminished among the majority of Christians in modern times, mostly because of the repugnant forensic implications for a divine repayment and the artificiality of Jesus' standing in for the whole human race. If anything, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross expresses his solidarity with sinners. In any event, the stumbling block of the atonement removed for the modern person, the work of the Redeemer can shine all the more brightly, namely, to work in the historically concrete situations and personal relationships in which people find themselves, implanting the uniqueness of his God-consciousness and thereby forming and transforming their own religious consciousness.

For the sake of completeness, two other aspects of Schleiermacher's christology should be briefly noted. First, God's "good pleasure" in reconciling sinners embraces the entire human race; in other words, the theologian was a proponent of universal salvation.⁶¹ Since Christianity moves on to "fellow-feeling" it is a contradiction to think of some as excluded, and as seems necessary, God-consciousness can continue to develop even after death, so great is the unchanging union of divine essence with human nature in Christ.

Secondly, the discussion on the person of the Redeemer has said nothing on his resurrection. While Schleiermacher affirmed the resurrection (and similarly the virgin birth and even the ascension), he did not stress them, for he felt there was little connection between the⁶² experience of redemption and the resurrection.

Before leaving Schleiermacher's christology altogether, mention should also be made of an issue introduced earlier in this paper, namely, the challenge posed by the rise of historical consciousness and pluralism. In his organization of the various religions from "lowest" to "highest," Schleiermacher identified monotheism as the highest form of religion and Christianity as the highest expression of monotheistic faith.⁶³ Even so, Schleiermacher was left with the question about the claim of absolute authority for Christianity in a world where the development of other (all?) religions could be traced as an evolutionary and historical process. The younger Schleiermacher did not hold to Christianity's claim of absolute truth;⁶⁴ Christianity may indeed signify the highest stage of religious development of humankind to date, but since the human being is a religious being, religious truth can be found elsewhere. Jesus Christ is an unsurpassable figure, but not the only source of religious self-consciousness.

Does that suggest that other mediators might come along at some future time, as Schleiermacher's critics had argued? Perhaps, but it should be noted that as the Redeemer, not everyone, or anyone, could become "like Jesus." In that sense, Jesus is unique as the final, supreme Redeemer.⁶⁵ Whether another Redeemer could come along is a somewhat spurious speculation, for the Redeemer has dwelt in the midst of human history, ordering the religious consciousness in the highest form known—or necessary.

NOTES: CHAPTER 3

1

Williams, 5. Niebuhr suggests that the only correction for meaningless recitation and empty imitation is for truth to be embodied in personal existence and actualized in the dialogue of life with life which is united with the awareness of selfhood and the presence of feeling; see Niebuhr, On Christ, 128.

2

Gerrish, Prince, 21.

3

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #15 (note that doctrine is only concerned with the feeling of God-consciousness as modified by Christ). Christian, 88f.; Niebuhr, On Christ, 17, 145. As Christian notes, theology is not faith but the rational expression of faith; faith could exist between those whose rational understanding and expression of the faith differed greatly, an important principle for guiding the internal life and ecumenical relations of theologically pluralistic churches in the present day.

4

Gerrish, Prince, 31. Theology addresses both God and the world, but only as each is "present" in religious-consciousness (Niebuhr, On Christ, 184f.). Dogmatics focuses on the language of piety by which understanding can take place; it traces the relations in which the inner basic fact of Christian piety modifies itself; see Ebeling, 132, 137. Apart from religious-consciousness, theological insights become exercises in mental gymnastics or are dismissed as incomprehensible.

5

Redeker, 105.

6

Niebuhr, On Christ, 139. Niebuhr refers to Anselm's words which Schleiermacher had prefixed to The Christian Faith: "Nor do I seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand."—"For he who does not believe does not experience, and he who does not experience, does not understand."

7

John E. Burkhardt, "Schleiermacher's Vision for Theology," Practical Theology, ed. Don S. Browning (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 43ff. The "theoretical" and "practical" are not separable but are distinguishable sides of a single reality (p. 54f.).

8

For Schleiermacher, theological theory without ministerial practice is pointless; ministerial practice without theory is blind (Christian, 30). Christian calls this the pastoral dimension of theology in that the pastor-theologian gives coherent and intellectual expression of the faith to the worshipping congregation, a very practical task! Christian compliments his pastoral function of theology with the confessional (the theologian speaks from within faith) and the communal (theology creates the worshipping fellowship, not the religious genius) roles (p. 30). In all things, the theologian is the servant of the church.

9

Burkhardt, 51 (emphasis added).

10

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #19. This was also one of the conclusions of The Brief Outline of Theological Studies (cf. Redeker, 104).

11

Christian, 93; Redeker, 106; Burkhardt, 44, characterizes Christianity as "reality in process." Gerrish also notes that the datum of doctrine is not unalterable truths of the Bible, but the present consciousness of the church; see Gerrish, Tradition, 43.

12

For theology as ecclesiastical critic, cf. Niebuhr, On Christ, 154; Gerrish Prince, 37.

13

Burkhardt, 54. "The understanding of the Christian tradition in ever changing circumstances is the heart of theological activity." Recognizing the role of historicism and freeing the church from slavish loyalty to the past are part of Schleiermacher's continuing legacy (Christian, 140). Religious instruction was accordingly to include a strong emphasis on history (Osborn, 24, 177).

14

Christian, 71; Redeker, 124f.

15

Pannenberg suggests that sin understood as the violation of divine commandments no longer functions today because pluralism has weakened moral absolutes; preaching such is accordingly pointless, if not actually harmful. He consequently recasts the understanding of sin into the language of non-identity. Since identity is a religious

question, non-identity may be called sin, the resolution to which is not to emphasize a penitential pietism (law-gospel) but to point to the illuminative power of the Christian tradition; see Pannenberg, 27f., 93. Pannenberg well illustrates the point that the problem lies not with sin but with the definition of sin.

16

Christian, 112.

17

Niebuhr, On Christ, 205ff.; Galligan, 28. Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #72. History gives no account about how the first humans developed. Note that Adam and Eve already possessed speech, from where one cannot say; a similar situation exists regarding the first instance of God-consciousness. Schleiermacher finds no compelling reason to develop a doctrine of the first instance of the human creature's appearance.

18

Primordial sin is manifested in actual sin (see Redeker, 125; Christian, 115). Cf. Christian Faith, #73.

19

Niebuhr, On Christ, 205f. Cf. Christian Faith, #60, 61. Note that continuous God-consciousness exists as potentiality. Lacking innate hostility to God, this becomes a positive affirmation of the goodness of persons.

20

Niebuhr, interestingly enough, faults Schleiermacher for his "impoverishment" of the theology of Calvin, although he observes it is consistent with the "scientific" thrust of The Christian Faith (On Christ, 200).

21

Christian, 71. Cf. Speeches (No. 5).

22

Christian, 114; Redeker, 125. Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #66, 67. Christian refers to the fall here, not as a "historical event" but as representing the universal warring of flesh and spirit. The disproportion between flesh and spirit replaces the more traditional understanding of sin as catastrophic rebellion (On Christ, 201).

23

Niebuhr, On Christ, 201.

24

Christian, 114. The consciousness of sin is accordingly the experience of the need for redemption (Redeker, 125).

25

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #90; Redeker, 125.

26

As noted in the text, the doctrine of Original Sin gave Adam powers that would rather not be expected in primitive humanity if it developed from lower animal forms. Actually, Schleiermacher did not speculate on sin's origins nor did he give it mythical form (cf. Niebuhr, On Christ, 206).

27

The developmental theodicy, of which Schleiermacher is representative, is described in Galligan, 27ff.

28

Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #48, 59. A "best world" is simply a matter for speculation.

29

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #58. Schleiermacher is much more interested in speaking of Original Perfection than of Original Sin.

30

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #48.

31

As Galligan observes, suffering does not necessarily lead to faith, and even if it does, surely God's being could be communicated in other ways; it is, for example, difficult to see the good in so obvious an evil as the Holocaust (p. 35f.).

32

All things owe their existence to God (Christian, 117), so whether God permits, uses, or allows evil and sin, he is still said to be responsible; the "problem of evil" finds its reconciliation for Schleiermacher in its purpose, i.e., to be overcome by redemption (cf. Christian Faith, #79, 80). Sin is "God's strange work" that drives persons into his arms.

33

Redeker, 127ff. (emphasis added). Redeker maintains that for Schleiermacher God is not the author of sin (or evil) in the same way that he is the author of redemption; because one does not have a consciousness of grace without a consciousness of sin, God ordains the reality of sin; again, attention is drawn to the purpose sin may serve. In the author's opinion, such distinctions are of little value, since regardless of the language used, God is still responsible for sin even if the good end—redemption—requires that which will awaken in persons the need for redemption. Personal freedom, of course, implies personal responsibility for sin which answers part of the theodicy issue. Perhaps the same could be said for social or moral evil (the obstruction

one afflicts upon the self and others); it would be difficult to maintain such in the case of natural evil (those forces that operate independently of humanity).

34
Niebuhr, On Christ, 245f.

35
Christian, 91.

36
Christian, 29. In this context, it is also worth noting that Schleiermacher discusses early in The Christian Faith (#22) four classical heresies which limit the church's understanding of the faith: Docetism (the view that Jesus is so different from the human condition that he cannot enter into it); Ebionism (the view that Jesus is so closely identified with the human condition that he has nothing unique, or redeeming, to offer it); Manicheanism (the view that the human condition is beyond redemption); and Pelagianism (the view that the human condition needs no redemption because sin is of little consequence). In effect, the first two heresies deny the Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth; the second two heresies render a Redeemer superfluous, for there is no redemption. In other words, God-consciousness or the "truth" of God, when channeled within Christian religious-consciousness, has specific parameters beyond which it cannot go without at the same time leaving what can legitimately be called "Christian Faith." Obviously, not all piety is Christian piety; neither is all religious consciousness of equal value to the person or the worshipping community or the human condition in general; judging the "truth" of religious-consciousness is ultimately not simply a matter of how a given individual "feels." It should also be noted that the Bible, the apostolic witness and norm for subsequent generations, is the adequate and reliable authority for faith and the standard against which religious dogmas are tested (cf. Christian, 130; Niebuhr, On Christ, 149).

37
Niebuhr, On Christ, 206. Cf. also Christian, 69; Redeker, 109. Niebuhr locates the sin-righteousness tension in human nature, not in a monstrous individual (Adam) and his progeny (humanity). Brunner sharply criticizes Schleiermacher at this point, charging that sin becomes not an offense against God but a retardation of higher-consciousness and that redemption is not a matter for forgiveness but of development (Gerrish, Tradition, 26). Niebuhr observes that if sin is understood as confusion and disorder, the wider view of religion can be understood as the personal quest for order (On Christ, 202). See further on note 42.

38
E.g., Gerrish, Prince, 11, 23, 53f; Redeker, 109.

39

Christian, 76f.

40

Brunner, e.g., finds that Propositions 3 and 4 are incompatible with Prop. 11; i.e., either Christianity is one religion among many or it is absolute and final. Brunner, of course, rejected Schleiermacher's attempt to treat Christianity within a framework of general religious consciousness (Niebuhr, On Christ, 175f). In fact, having called Schleiermacher a "mystic" (corresponding to Part 1) he concludes that the evidence of the evangelical Word (in Part 2) is but a mere "disturbance" within the real Schleiermacher (Gerrish, Tradition, 27f). Cf. also Christian, 95ff. Gerrish, Tradition, 32ff., also discusses the alleged tension between metaphysical-philosophical language and the dogmatics of Christian faith. Williams, 9, 50f., argues that Schleiermacher saw the entire Christian Faith as a pretheoretical, phenomenological theology which precedes metaphysics.

41

Gerrish, Tradition, 35ff. If the transition from Part 1 to Part 2 was difficult for Brunner, the reverse was difficult for Schleiermacher!

42

Redeker, 85. The emphasis on order reflects Niebuhr, On Christ, 195f. (cf. note 37 above). Inner order requires a sense of involvement with multiple dependencies and an ultimate dependence, hence the need for a mediator as well.

43

The importance of this principle should not be underestimated. Christian, 107; Niebuhr, On Christ, 160.

44

Niebuhr, On Christ, 213, e.g., who also notes that for Schleiermacher, the execution of this text should be the basis of the clergy's vocation. Cf. also Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #93; Redeker, 135, 190 (The "myth" became historic).

45

Niebuhr, On Christ, 157; cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #96, 97.

46

Christian, 40, 118f. This is also an example of "christology from below" replacing a "christology from above" (see below, note 52, and the discussion in Chapter 2, note 71).

47

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #94; Gerrish, Prince, 48; Niebuhr, On Christ, 225; Redeker, 134; Verheyden, Introduction to The Life of Jesus, xlviii. Perfect God-consciousness also implies, by

definition, the sinlessness of Jesus. In any event, Jesus' God-consciousness meant that the thought of God pervaded everything that happened to him (Gerrish, Prince, 68f.).

48

Redeker (p. 49) quotes the Speeches in describing Jesus' divinity as "the consciousness of the uniqueness of his relation to God...and of the power of the same to communicate itself and evoke religion in others" (emphasis added). Cf. Christian, 122, 127.

49

Redeker, 85, 135; Verheyden, xlvi; Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #90.

50

Verheyden, xxxiiiff.; see Chapter 4 of this project.

51

Niebuhr, On Christ, 214, and Names of God, 191; Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #89.

52

Christian, 72, 121; Niebuhr, On Christ, 218; Redeker, 49. It should be noted that Schleiermacher's critics (e.g., Strauss and Schweitzer) raised the question of how it is possible to speak of an archetype who becomes historical, a source of new life in the community, or of a Mediator who himself needs no mediation without dissolving the conditions and limits of human life. This is the subject of The Life of Jesus, and in it Schleiermacher moves within the docetic-ebionite dialectic (Verheyden, liii). Note also that in traditional theology, Jesus' person makes his work (redemption) possible; in Schleiermacher, the experience of redemption makes it possible to say something about Christ's person: because he mediates God's existence (his work), it is possible to say something about his person, namely, that he participates in the divine essence (Christian, 73, 120).

53

For the distinction of "Jesus" and "Christ", see Niebuhr, On Christ, 214, 228. Mention might be made that Schleiermacher did not believe a "connected" biography of Jesus could be written from the synoptic gospels or the narrative in John (Verheyden, xiii, xxix, xxxii); the rise of science posed difficulties as well; discounting the miracles, e.g., cast a new light on the possibility of ever writing a biography of Jesus; the gospels do reflect, however, the response of the witnesses to Jesus' communication of himself, i.e., that Jesus' God-consciousness was attributed to him by his disciples—otherwise the New

Testament is a false document (On Christ, 217, 221f.). The gospels need not be infallible in all their details so long as they verify and mediate the picture of him (Gerrish, Prince, 50).

54

Christian, 113, 115; Niebuhr, On Christ, 247.

55

Redeker, 140, says that by such an association, Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer. Cf. also Christian, 123. Verheyden, xlii, xliii, also observes that while the philosophy of religion cannot establish any particular happening as redemptive, historical theology can and does in the historical occasion given in Jesus Christ. Redeker, 132, also speaks of an "existential experience" with Jesus as that which imparts the reality of God; Christ and his followers enjoy a living community (emphasis added).

56

So Redeker, 138, who uses the word in the sense that the higher life cannot be demonstrated by those not touched by it; it is simply experienced in the immediate existence and mystery of faith.

57

Redeker, 83, 85. The religious self-consciousness posited in creation liberates in the Redeemer to personal reality, an existential concept of revelation (Redeker, 150, emphasis added).

58

Verheyden, lvi. "Person-forming" (Niebuhr, On Christ, 214f.) begins in that communication which focuses on the feeling of absolute dependence, the consciousness of sin, and the consciousness of "God's good pleasure" (redemption); the church has an ongoing role in this regard.

59

See, e.g., Christian, 125f (for whom the new situation has cosmic dimensions) and Redeker, 137f.

60

See, e.g., Christian, 126f.; Redeker, 12f., 139ff., 148; Verheyden, xiii, for the subject of the atonement.

61

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #118, 120; Christian, 130; Galligan, 26; Redeker, 149.

62

Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #99. Christian, 129; Redeker, 143.

63

Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #8, 9, 11. Its goal orientation (or high morality which is shared with Judaism), its differentiation of relative and absolute dependencies, its ability to be self-critical (Redeker, 48), and its power to order self-consciousness in relation to God, world and self are some of the reasons for the superiority of Christianity. Cf. also, Niebuhr, On Christ, 253.

64

Redeker, 50; Christian, 74.

65

Christian, 88, 123f.

CHAPTER 4

The Community of the Redeemed

An Excursus in "Christmas Eve"

In 1806 Schleiermacher published his remarkable book, Christmas Eve, which records the conversation of a single family gathered to celebrate the Redeemer's birth. The various members each recount the traditions that most captured the significance of the Incarnation, and because those elements differed from one member of the family to the next, Schleiermacher was really addressing the variety of ways that the religious consciousness is stimulated. In that light, Christmas Eve also serves as a basic introduction to the fundamental shift¹ Schleiermacher brought to modern theology.

That Schleiermacher wrote Christmas Eve while working on his translation of Plato is probably no mere coincidence. For he learned from Plato that truth emerges out of the whole complex of the living interchange among living personalities, involving in the present case mood, personal life experiences, music, and the word.² The family itself represents that larger fellowship of family and friends, the church, that while historically based and conditioned yet mediates the experience of the Christ event.³

To some extent, Schleiermacher is himself present in each of the characters, especially Eduard and Ernst. The somewhat-skeptical Leonhardt is important, too, as the advocate of historical theology and

historical criticism. For Leonhardt, it is finally neither doctrine nor history but the gathered power of the people that best captures the nature of Christian faith. The festival itself induces belief in Jesus; in fact, approached from the perspective of history alone, the Story would appear absurd.⁴ The Story lives at all because it lives in people.

Ernst represents the specifically Christian pattern of religious-consciousness, namely, that internal experience that opens a new world of joy. However, an experience that profound demands a ground outside of the person and can only point to the existence of an historical founder, Jesus of Nazareth, whose birth this family now celebrates in various ways.⁵ Again, there is a notable absence of theological dogma in the musings of Ernst, and Schleiermacher's thought is evident in this figure in the sense that the initial experience of this new and joyful world (of redemption) opens the religiously sensitive to the significance of the Christmas story. Later, from the experience of redemption, is the connection made between the culture (or the traditions and myths by which the festival is celebrated) and the Christ.

Eduard, like John (the mystical evangelist and Schleiermacher's favorite gospel), shows little interest in particular events; instead, he focuses on the union of the eternal with the human and the spiritual meaning of the "word become flesh." Like Ernst, Eduard wants to talk of the new life, but from the perspective of the divine, i.e., his interest lies in the "Whence" from which the joy arises. He finds that it arises

in the union between pure becoming and eternal being; by itself, an endless stream of experiences unrelated to an end produces disunity, confusion, and a sense of lostness; redemption occurs when one's stream of becoming, his or her experiences, finds itself in the eternal, i.e., when being has united itself in the Son of man. In other words, whereas the other discourses illustrate the importance of mood and feeling, Eduard shows Schleiermacher's Platonic and Johannine spirit: the individual person exists in a state of fallenness, but the self may become "man-in-himself," the apogee of the created order, when the Logos appears in the finite, sensible nature and imparts the principle whereby one can recognize his or her own full humanity. In short, there is no understanding of humanity apart from Christ.⁶

The dialogue contains other conversations, and together they illustrate the point that for Schleiermacher religious institutions and customs, human nature itself, and history are allies that in concert serve the quest of the Redeemer.⁷ As noted above, doctrine and dogma are notably missing from the way this family celebrates Christmas; so too is any sense of biblicism!⁸ Nevertheless, Christmas Eve retains its importance in understanding Schleiermacher precisely because the way to Christ is paved through a variety of socially mediated experiences. The next chapter will draw some of the implications from this startling principle as they relate to the educational program of the church. It remains in the present context, however, to speak of one of the most important sources of the so-called socially mediated experiences, that which comes in and through the church.

The Community of the Redeemed

For Schleiermacher, religion is necessarily communal or social in nature.⁹ This means that the church is not primarily an institution; rather, it is a community created by the awakening in the worshiper of a consciousness of oneness with all other creatures; because religion (specifically the feeling of absolute dependence) unifies, the person whose experience includes the genuine awakening of religious-consciousness will seek the higher synthesis that overcomes fragmentation. That process, faith, creates community because it drives the believer toward expressing and sharing that vision in a fellowship in which the awareness of faith is strengthened by mutuality.

The individual person is not lost in or absorbed by the community. Schleiermacher certainly recognized that a sense of oneself is possible at all because of Thou's standing over against the individual, and conversely, the person stands over against the community as an independent being.¹⁰ The community and the individual participate in and sustain the other. The individual receives from and communicates to the community. The "ethical personality" exists in the reciprocal motions of being-for-self and being-for-the-community.

It may overstate the case to say that the church, taking its cue from Christmas Eve, is a family, but like the family of Christmas Eve¹¹ the church is a community, "a chorus of friends and brothers." As Eduard puts it in his speech in the family dialogue, the church mediates the perfected humanity of Christ to the living community of individuals,¹² and in that respect the church is the self-consciousness of the race.

Historically, it traces its life to its founder, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, but it is also rooted in human nature as it appears in family and community, i.e., in a people. Not only does this emphasize the obvious, namely, that a relation to the Christian community is at the same time a relation to Christ (and a relation to God), but it also grounds the church in the traditions and experiences of the people who comprise the community at that moment. Literally, the church is the people, the "family" (or community), where devout people bring their various experiences to bear upon each other.¹³ By implication, the experiences need not be identical (indeed, they cannot be identical), but the differences can exist side by side and contribute to the development of Christian God-consciousness in the "family."

The motif of the church's role as mediator between the work of the Redeemer and the creation plays a prominent role in Schleiermacher's thinking. The church is like the foreign ambassador who interprets his sovereign's mind in a strange country.¹⁴ The church has an historical moment of origin, namely, when Jesus of Nazareth labored among the people, and in his absence the church serves as that power which actually transforms the world.¹⁵ In fact, Schleiermacher goes so far as to say that no culture can be complete and fully alive without a church, for without the church, a society lacks the stimulation of the expression of the highest, most unified feeling, i.e., the feeling of absolute dependence. Lacking a church, a given culture will find its immediate self-consciousness at least partially hampered. It will function, but without art and style, rather mechanically, and most

important of all, without a sense of the inner unity that true religious
¹⁶
 feeling promotes.

In addition to its role as mediator, the church for Schleiermacher
 is preeminently the community of the higher life (and therefore the
 community of blessedness) because its members find in religious feeling
 the higher life presented in the perfection of Jesus' own religious-
 consciousness. The church, in other words, is neither a mere
 institution of society nor a simple fellowship, a loose collection of
 people, for Christ himself is active through his spirit among the
¹⁷
 faithful. This is not to say, obviously, that the church is or ever
 shall be perfect, for the church itself struggles with the effects of
¹⁸
 sin and so finds its own progress toward perfection stifled.
 Nevertheless, the church contains and administers (or mediates) the
 faith to the world. In this sense is the kingdom of God present, not as
 a theocracy focused on Israel, but in the words and deeds of Jesus
¹⁹
 around whom the people of God take their sensible form.

Brief mention should be made in this context of Schleiermacher's
 concept of election. He rejects dual election on the grounds that it
²⁰
 shatters the sense of racial unity generated by grace. However, the
 theme of election itself was indispensable to Schleiermacher's
²¹
 theological system. For one thing, without a concept like election,
 theology is subject to the persuasions of Pelagianism and Manicheanism
 which means that a condition or situation exists for which God is not
 the author; in that case a person would be something less than utterly
 dependent on God and would possess a measure of autonomy over against

the prevenience of the grace of God. As far as Schleiermacher was concerned, God alone took the initiative in stirring the heart in the direction of faith.

For the elect, i.e., for the fulfilled person reborn through the grace of Christ, there comes a sense of freedom.²² God's good pleasure in redemption is experienced by the elect as a personal share in that good pleasure which means that the elect no longer fears the power of sin or the inner confusion it generates. The accompanying affective response, and perhaps the true "sign" of the redeemed, is joy. The freedom of Christ, i.e., the freedom of being directed to the telos Christ defines, in and of itself elicits a mood of joy, not just for the individual but for the community as well.²³ Joy is not the equivalent of the feeling of absolute dependence, but is rather the interpretation of the content of the specifically Christian understanding of religious-consciousness. It is important to note that this Christian religious-consciousness, joy, does not ignore the pain and the incompleteness of life; rather as God-consciousness increases, the resulting joy overcomes life's sorrow through a more embracing harmony; in effect, the broader perspective of faith provides a new context for evaluating pain because the coming of Jesus represents One who includes²⁴ and transcends the contradictions of temporal experience. This is especially evident in Christmas Eve where the nativity and the Christmas mood in general release that quality of life which can only be inwardly²⁵ appropriated as joy and peace. Like the feeling of absolute dependence itself, the sense of joy must have its source, and when

present in the life of the redeemed, joy is confirmation that the living Christ has been at work.

NOTES: CHAPTER 4

1

Gerrish, Prince, 27. Christmas Eve is also basic for understanding Schleiermacher's christology. In the Speeches, Schleiermacher had difficulty answering the question, Why Jesus? The christology of Christmas Eve begins to answer the problem of his uniqueness (Gerrish, 45f.).

2

Verheyden, Introduction to The Life Of Jesus, xxi. Niebuhr, On Christ, 42, adds to the list of the avenues Schleiermacher uses in Christmas Eve to show how grace is communicated; they include gifts, repartee and serious conversation, the mother-child relationship, the polarity of male and female, the religious nurture of the child, and the transition from childish innocence to godly joy. On the male-female polarity in Christmas Eve, cf. Niebuhr, On Christ, 50f. (basically, for Schleiermacher, women have more immediacy to God and the transition to the higher existence is smoother and more gradual; men spend much of their life in a "wasteland," estranged from the higher existence).

3

See the discussion in this chapter, The Community of the Redeemed. Cf. also Niebuhr, On Christ, 44.

4

Gerrish, Prince, 47; Verheyden, xxif.; Niebuhr, On Christ, 60f. Doctrine is too remote from the uneducated; in particular, people have little concept of the theological meaning of Christmas (which tends to underscore Schleiermacher's contention that theology is for the church's leaders, the clergy). Custom, or social myth, guides the people and helps them appropriate the power of Jesus' God-consciousness.

5

Niebuhr, On Christ, 62f. also concludes that the special joy, "universalized" beyond the moment, shows that the existence of myth is not arbitrary; Verheyden, xxiii, xxvi, xlv.

6

Niebuhr, On Christ, 64ff.; Verheyden, xxivff.

7

Niebuhr, On Christ, 45.

8

Niebuhr, On Christ, 40, who also observes that Christmas Eve reflects not the times but Schleiermacher's particular circle. Schleiermacher has been faulted at this point for too easily accommodating the culture. This point will be discussed in the next chapter (cf. note 15, this chapter.)

9

Cf. the Fourth Speech, which Redeker, 54, criticizes as theologically weak, a reflection of his early dependence on romanticism; see further, Redeker, 51f., and Christian, 65, 83f. Bouyer, 59, for all his criticism of Schleiermacher at least credits Schleiermacher with promoting a rediscovery of the social character of religion as opposed to the rationalizing individualism of the time. It might also be noted that given the subjectivity of religious experience, the church serves an important function in "ratifying" the believer (Christian, 47).

10

Niebuhr, On Christ, 116ff. Schleiermacher criticized the Social Contract Theory on the grounds that the individual and the state are not antithetical to each other, for the community is an expression of human freedom and not a denial of it. The individual, in other words, is not shaped in a deterministic way by society.

11

Redeker, 52f., who notes that this reflects the church of his Moravian experience. This church lacks the priest-lay distinction.

12

Niebuhr, On Christ, 65f. In a more contemporary setting, religion has also been identified as that force which sustains civilization above the point of barbarism; see Metz, 70.

13

Cf. the Fourth Speech (Redeker, 52).

14

This contrasts with Barth, e.g., who characterized the church as a postman plodding along (Gerrish, Tradition, 42ff.).

15

Cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #88: "In this corporate life [of the church] which goes back to the influence of Jesus, redemption is effected by Him through the communication of His sinless perfection" (emphasis added). Whether mere presence and communication is sufficient to redeem and transform the world will be considered in the next chapter (along with the theme of whether or not the church is, in Schleiermacher's scheme, too closely aligned with society; cf. note 8, this chapter). The point here is that the church derives its great importance from its calling to represent the Redeemer in his absence. This ascribes to the church considerable power (a reflection of Schleiermacher's Moravian background) since it serves as the means by

which God achieves his purposes. This power has outward and inward dimensions (Verheyden, xlvf.): outwardly, the church derives from the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth; inwardly, it is the power of Jesus' unqualified dependence which is present as the new life in the community; by his working and living, Jesus communicates vitality and direction to the church which enlivens the community's own religious-consciousness. Again, this is not to be reduced to psychological process alone (a bit of Schleiermacher-the-mystic?).

16

Niebuhr, On Christ, 131f.

17

Redeker, 85, 138f., 187f. The Enlightenment considered the church a mere association, just like the state and family, only this association was for the purpose of nurturing piety and moral instruction. Schleiermacher emphasized the church as a community of faith and life, though not the supernatural institutional community of an older Protestantism whose commission was the proclamation of the word. Cf. also Niebuhr, On Christ, 131.

18

Redeker, 146. The church cannot ever be the absolute ethical authority because of its limited understanding (Niebuhr, On Christ, 132). The church is guided more concretely (i.e., more than is suggested by an abstract "spiritual" presence of Christ) by its historical traditions and, of course, the Scriptures (Niebuhr, 150). In addition, it must always be remembered that because immediate-consciousness unifies absolute and relative dependencies, differences within communions are not serious obstacles to the progress and work of the church in so far as the church intuitively its religious-consciousness as a unity in God (cf. Christian, 65).

19

Verheyden, xxxiif.

20

Christian, 129; Cf. Schleiermacher Christian Faith, #120. To say that some are not destined for salvation is to retreat into gnosticism.

21

Niebuhr, Names of God, 193; On Christ, 252ff., for this paragraph.

22

Niebuhr, On Christ, 255f.

23

Verheyden, xliii. Cf. Redeker, 130.

24

Niebuhr, On Christ, 124f., 202f; Verheyden, xxiii.

25

Gerrish, Prince, 47; Niebuhr, On Christ, 43.

CHAPTER 5

Reflections on the Vital Church—

The Role of Christian Education

A Word on Practical Theology

Much attention has been given in recent years to the separation between academic studies and practical or applied studies in theology, especially from the vantage point of the life of the parish. As the argument goes, the academic centers on critical thinking while failing to engage the questions of human existence; the applied raises the questions of human existence and answers them, or tries to, with mere technique.¹ Correcting the false reduction of ministerial practice to technique or work (read "thinking") done elsewhere is the concern of practical theology.

In his Brief Outline, Schleiermacher divided the study of theology² into three parts: Philosophical, Historical, and Practical Theology. The relationship between them was sequential, i.e., one began with the "root," Philosophical Theology, moved to the "body," Historical Theology, and ended with the "crown," Practical Theology. The first step was theoretical and universal; the last step was particular and technical. In all fairness, "technical" may be somewhat of a misnomer, for Schleiermacher did not speak so much of rules and techniques as of art and talent and interior disposition; the pastor really was—and is!—an artist, but the Brief Outline has been criticized

because the one-way, sequential relationship has relegated practical theology to the techniques and conclusions of thinking done elsewhere. The practical has no influence on the theoretical; instead, "applied Christianity" receives its tasks from philosophical and historical studies which show first the essence of the faith and then, by implication, where its implementation in and through the church needs to develop in order to be true to itself. In short, in doing their homework, the leaders of the church will know what direction ministry needs to take; those with faith and learning will develop a passionate wisdom.

Whether Schleiermacher conceived of practical theology as a "derivative" or "applied" theology is not clear; but at the least³ theological reflection arises out of and gives guidance to a community of faith in the praxis of its mission. Practical theology is a "practical knowing" in which skill (technique) and understanding⁴ (theory) cooperate and guide the church. Always for Schleiermacher theology is the key discipline for those who would guide the church, for theology wrestles with the meaning of Christianity (or Christian religious-consciousness). Such theological inquiry, however, is purposeful as well in that it outlines the resulting nature of ministry for the ecclesiastical community.

The point for practical theology is the cooperative, dialectical relationship between the theoretical and the applied, and if the practical theologian seems overly preoccupied with the obvious (the nature and tasks of parish ministry) it is for good reason. For the church's leaders, primarily the clergy, so often seem more like managers

and technocrats who finely tune the machinery of organizations called churches than specially-trained spiritual leaders within the faith community. They seem to direct cafeterias that offer a variety of services to a consumer-oriented mentality instead of leading people unto greater degrees of faith and faithfulness. Practical theology is a corrective in this regard.

Education provides a good example. As a dimension of ecclesiastical life, education is not a matter of mere instruction but is oriented towards a specific goal, the formation and transformation of persons towards Christian faith such that they become "ambassadors" for God.⁵ Since the goal is itself the result of theological reflection, the language of education changes; for example, "instruction" as such is replaced by the notion of nurturing persons in the discovery of what it means to be a Christian in the world. As a consequence, education also becomes highly purposeful and particular regardless of the forms it takes;⁶ for a people of God who have a mission (a theoretical-theological understanding of the faith) need the nurturing and guidance in general in the ongoing praxis of their life together that will encourage their spiritual formation and transformation as the means by which their mission is fulfilled. Note that a theoretical understanding of the Christian faith directly affects a congregation's praxis and conversely that the congregation's praxis becomes rudderless and stagnate without the theoretical framework of a mission as a people of God. The goal or beliefs will guide the praxis; in its praxis, the congregation tests its understanding of the goal or mission and

presumably will grow in its beliefs. In short, the two are dialectically related.

Models in Education:

The Awakening of Faith

In focusing on education as a primary tool in nurturing the faithful and in the revitalization of the church, certain themes from Schleiermacher's theological approach must be kept in mind: his concept that all persons have an innate capacity for religion and therefore need not be "made" religious; his understanding of the fluid nature of doctrine and theology; his liberating view of sin which is less judgmental and more descriptive of the state of one's God-consciousness; and his view of the Redeemer who "assumes" or draws the believer into his own God-consciousness. Schleiermacher's insights in these areas generally suggest a developmentally- and experientially-based approach to personal and corporate growth in Christian religious-consciousness and the life and praxis of the church. He would not only allow but also encourage much variety in helping the community to understand its identity and vocation, and by implication his approach impresses upon the leaders of the community the need for intentionality, planning, and the delineation of objectives.

From one point of view it would seem that even the most intentional of the church's leaders would find it difficult to derive a theology of education from Schleiermacher. For he held that religion could not be taught at all but only awakened!⁷ This is especially apparent in the⁸ third of his speeches to his friends, the cultured despisers. He begins by observing that in the upheaval and confusion of the times, his

times, one should not expect the slumbering spark of religion to glow too strongly. For religious feeling prospers best in quiet, a feature decidedly absent from the environment. But even under the best of circumstances, religious instruction ("meaning that piety is teachable") is absurd because the words by which one expresses creed or doctrine are but shadows of his or her own emotions, and even if the words are comprehended by others, the underlying emotion belongs to the person; consequently, others can never possess what the person understands as religion. As it turns out one person does not train another in religion, for "the universe itself trains its own observers and admirers"; the spirit is the domain of the "sacred workshop of the universe."

Carried to the extreme, the involvement of others in one's religious life could more easily hinder than help that process. Schleiermacher held that every person is born with a religious capacity, and if fellowship between the self and the "Primal Source" were not severed, religion would infallibly be developed. But this, of course, is precisely the problem: the modern age (as with the post-modern secular age) does suppress the religious consciousness by binding people to the finite and by a mentality that calculates and explains away the mysterious and the marvelous. Not the doubters (the "cultured despisers"), not the immoral, but the practical-minded pose the greatest hindrance to religion!

If anything, the cultivation of religion or the awakening of faith is a matter of removing that which blocks the creative energy of the spirit as it seeks fellowship with God. The utilitarian penchant that

replaces imagination with "preparations for life," the middle-class demand for activity that stifles quiet contemplation, the emphasis on analysis and explanation at the expense of the joy of discovery as found in childlike intuition, above all else, an excessive concentration on the "civil life"—such tendencies must be shunned. In general, Schleiermacher counsels the religious person to keep far from that which the religious opponent holds dear. Instead, the religious person must be reflective, concentrating especially on the self. It is certainly no small matter that to Schleiermacher all truly religious individuals have had a mystical trait and an imaginative nature.

Fortunately, this is not all Schleiermacher has to say on the matter of religious education, and as will be seen below, contemporary theorists lend themselves well to his basic orientation that religion cannot be taught by transmitting concepts or memorizing formal statements but rather is to be awakened and developed experientially and, as was so important to Schleiermacher, within the faith community. As will also be seen, the development of the religious life includes some positive steps as well, both for Schleiermacher and modern educators. As the third Speech shows, there is much that hampers the religious life, and such factors are to be avoided. At the same time, there is much that fosters the religious life, and these are to be embraced and followed.

Models in Education:

Religion-as-Pilgrimage

One of the more helpful images guiding the contemporary church is that of the spiritual journey or pilgrimage. Since this image does not compartmentalize "religion" and "life," it is quite correct to speak of the religious pilgrimage as embracing one's total life; conversely, one's life journey is (or, for those with an insufficiently awakened religious-consciousness, can be) understood as a religious journey as well. Either way, the model views life and certainly persons as dynamic. Needs and challenges change as the journey unfolds for each person, and ideally the response to the changing agenda of one's life and the accumulated experiences of the journey produce growth. Change is, of course, inevitable; from this viewpoint, though, change is purposeful and encourages the development of the person as well. In short, the religious pilgrim grows in faith and understanding over a lifetime.

Before proceeding with the educational implications of this model, it will be helpful to mention Schleiermacher's views on regeneration and sanctification. In brief, regeneration represents the foundation and beginning of the Christian life or pilgrimage and includes both conversion and justification; sanctification represents the continuation of the new life begun in Christ and one's growth in grace.⁹ Consciousness of this must be awakened in each person. Once awakened, regeneration and sanctification consist in an ever-growing dominance of God-consciousness over the whole person which has obvious "person-forming" potential.¹⁰ For the purposes of this model, it should be

noted that great stress is placed on conversion. More than mere response to an impulse, conversion represents a radical reorientation of one's whole life.¹¹

It might also be helpful in this context to note just how strongly Schleiermacher stressed the role of Christ in the shaping of lives.¹² His thinking even suggests that his view of the Redeemer's work is more Christo-morphic than Christo-centric, i.e., that Jesus of Nazareth represents the ideal of human nature and serves as the person whose presence reorganizes and clarifies the Christian consciousness of absolute dependence. Admittedly, this moves Christ somewhat off-center. He remains central in his role of shaping and re-forming the Christian faith, and it accounts for the obvious fact that knowledge of God can derive from other sources than that of Christ.

If life is a pilgrimage, more specifically a religious pilgrimage, and if the Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth, draws the pilgrim unto himself and imparts his spirituality (or God-consciousness) through a process of growth, then it is evident that the spiritual vitality of the individual and the whole fellowship, the church, demands a new and undoubtedly broader understanding of the spiritual-religious life to which the Redeemer's God-consciousness has reference. The classical definition which separates the life of the spirit from the life of the world is no longer adequate, in part because that dichotomy excludes much of the creation from the proper concern of the Creator. As hinted briefly above, a more adequate understanding of the spiritual life envisions the formation of persons who live in the world as the advance sign of the new humanity. As such, the spiritual life has to do with a general

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consciousness of God's presence in the midst of one's own daily life.

It recognizes (with Schleiermacher) that people are inherently religious and that the religious-spiritual life progresses from a general feeling of absolute dependence to that vital spiritual life that is of Christ.

In broad terms, the spirituality being commended to the contemporary church envisions that particular life of faith and faithfulness that is derived from a conscious and deliberate relationship with God through the Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth. Such a relationship bears fruit in and through the individual and the fellowship of the church. It is progressive, i.e., regeneration, the free gift, and sanctification, the consequence, are inexorably linked together over a lifetime of discovery and service. As such, a meaningful spirituality will have both a belief component and an action (or praxis) component, and a program of nurturing persons in their spirituality must keep both elements in mind. Spirituality is lived in relation to God, self, and the world. It shapes how one conceives both the nature of his or her existence and the resulting course of his or her new life.

14

Pilgrims in search of such a progressive spirituality will seek out the faith community, for they are by nature affiliative. Because the journey entails a variety of experiences that must be integrated, the church assumes crucial nurturing functions at this point as well.

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Identifying the points at which the church must assume nurturing functions is, however, only part of the task—and the easy part at that! For experiences vary from person to person and within the same person as he or she passes from one life stage and one stage of faith to another;

consequently, nurturing faith (or spiritual formation and transformation) requires a wide variety of approaches.¹⁶

The next section will discuss in some detail how the concept of catechesis can give shape to an educational program which calls for variety. At this point, though, two general comments should be made. First, the average church has more opportunities for education and spiritual formation than is generally recognized; pastors as well as the laity need to embrace the many "teachable moments" that actually surface in the life of the church.¹⁷

Secondly, whatever form the educational-nurturing program might take, room must be made for the aesthetic and the intuitive, in a word, for that which goes beyond rationalism.¹⁸ Schleiermacher makes the same point in the family dialogue of Christmas Eve. Music as a medium of religious expression superior to the word, the simplicity of childhood, the "feminine nature," and the capacity to see intuitively the heart of things are all avenues of religious experience and, in this context, of spiritual formation.¹⁹ In fact, while the women move the group with their Christmas reminiscences, the men nearly destroy the moment with their theological arguments! This is not to say that verbal, analytical, rational expression is to be eliminated; rather, room is to be made for the receptive-intuitive as well in order to overcome the limitations of spiritual development posed by a technological society.²⁰ In short, spiritual formation needs to make use of the capacity to wonder, create, dream, fantasize, imagine, and appreciate the element of the mysterious. It will make use of dance, art, drama, and above all storytelling.²¹ As stated above, because people learn in different ways

and have different needs at different times in their religious pilgrimage, spiritual formation and nurture will demand a wide variety of formats.

Models in Education:

A New Appreciation of Catechesis

As mentioned above, intentionality, goal-setting, and the clear delineation of objectives are crucial elements of the church's educational program. As Tertullian observed, Christians are made, not born, but they will not be made at all unless the leadership of the church sets this as a conscious priority. The concept of catechesis answers this need.

At the risk of repetition, catechesis responds to the initial orientation of religious development just described. That religious-consciousness grows is, of course, a major thrust in Schleiermacher's thoughts regarding religious education. Given the evolutionary spirit of the time, it was perhaps inevitable that Schleiermacher should anticipate the constant evolution of the human race. Education in general is essential for human progress because only through education can cultural gains be maintained and advanced. Religious education (or more specifically, Christian education) also plays a crucial role in human destiny because it passes along from one generation to the next the values of the various faith communions; each new generation builds on the past but is not limited to the past; on the contrary, the rising generation is prepared for the future which means growth in approximating the ideals of the Founder of Christian faith. In effect,

each new generation progresses beyond the spiritual achievements of those that preceded.²³

The goal, then, of education, the goal addressed by catechesis, is to make actual in the person what Ethics affirms as ideal. The goal has two dimensions: the development of the individual's own personality and each person taking his or her rightful place in society with a sense of vocation.²⁴ In more contemporary language, the goal of education in the church is the spiritual formation of persons through whom God can make his appeal in the world. Such people are reconciled and called to a vocation of service as ambassadors.²⁵ Because the formation and transformation of persons towards Christian faith continues over a lifetime, the emphasis falls on growth and development.

The spiritual transformation of people is the subject and goal of catechesis. As defined by John Westerhoff, catechesis refers in general to a process by which people are initiated into the Christian community and its faith, revelation, and vocation. The process entails continual conversion, nurture, transformation, and formation by the living tradition of the community. It has in mind a true humanity (Merton) and provides a context for falling in love with Christ.²⁶ Catechesis would lead people beyond the time-space limitations of the secular by stimulating the spiritual-religious dimension common to everyone.

Catechesis has primary implications for the pastoral ministry since it falls to the pastoral office (although not exclusively to the pastor) to see that the Word is proclaimed and interpreted to the end that persons will be formed and transformed and that the community will be able to live under the Gospel. As a pastoral ministry, catechesis

deliberately seeks to make God's Word known, lived, conscious, and active. It intentionally devises ways to enhance the community's faith pilgrimage and vocation of service. Its specific tools include: kerygma (the proclamation of God in Jesus Christ and the call to new perceptions and transformation); didache (the illumination of experience); evangelization (the word and deed that aids conversion, radical reorientation, and transformation); conversion (from ordinary understandings of life); and assimilation (the word and deed that supports nurturing and growing).²⁷

In addition to the pastoral office or mode by which the church understands and structures its life together, catechesis carries certain implications for the pastor-leader of the church. From Schleiermacher's perspective, in the hands of the theologian and working pastor education²⁸ is a "practical" task and part of the cure of souls. However, because the pilgrimage and catechetical models involve so much diversity and require so much variety in programming and everyday pastoral work, the pastor-leader-educator also must be something of an artist! People's needs and situations change along with the natural course of their faith and life stages; ministry requires a sensitivity that is essentially artistic in nature; lest the artistic remain only esoteric, pastors also need the "practical" knowing that will meet specific opportunities with the word and deed that guides persons in living their faith. The concept of catechesis challenges pastors and other leaders in the church to be artists, but artists equipped with a practical knowledge that weds the personal need of the moment with a vision of mission as God's people.

Defining a concept, of course, does not necessarily give it the imperative urgency that it warrants. If the state of most so-called adult education programs in the local church today does not suggest the need for a catechetical emphasis in the church, perhaps Richard Baxter (1615-1691) can. Baxter wrote a remarkable book called The Reformed Pastor which had reference not to pastors of the Calvinist tradition but to pastors who were renewed in heart and mind and so equipped to fulfill their key objective in parish ministry, namely, the education of the people committed to their care. In his own words: "The first and main point I submit to you is that it is the unquestionable duty of all ministers of the church to catechize and to teach personally all who are submitted to their care."²⁹ Pastoral work he defined as a great opportunity to spread the knowledge of Christ among the people by personal ministry. He lays great stress on giving individual attention to parishioners and dwells at length on the matter of the pastor's own preparation before going forth to educate the church's members.³⁰

Though written over three hundred years ago, Baxter's book finds a very contemporary expression in the concept of the spiritual director or spiritual guide. The spiritual guide, like the "reformed pastor," exploits the pastoral office as a teaching office with the goal of forming and transforming persons on their faith pilgrimage. Westerhoff is even more direct in drawing the connection between the goal of catechesis and spiritual guidance: catechesis simply needs guides who will be involved in personal ministry (Baxter) with the other.³¹ Such spiritual directors do not necessarily provide all the answers, but they do provide the environment, reflection, and even techniques whereby the

pilgrim may grow in faith and bear the fruit of faithfulness. In biblical language, the guide leads a pilgrim people through the wilderness and unto the promised land. The wilderness can represent many things, all of them inadequate in and of themselves to fulfill the longings of the human spirit, and the promised land is simply the vision of a better way.³² Obviously, the spiritual guide must have some firsthand acquaintance with the vision but, again, does not serve as the only source of answers.³³

An important question emerges here: does the spiritual director guide the one (or at best a few) or the many? Merton maintains that spiritual direction is only necessary for those with a special vocation;³⁴ routine contacts will suffice for the ordinary Christian. While not using the term, Baxter argues rather forcefully that spiritual direction-education should touch all the families of the parish on a regular basis. For the pastor, it would seem that the choice is between in-depth guidance for a few or somewhat more superficial guidance for the many.

Either way, given the demands of pastoral ministry today, perhaps it is time to recover the notion that pastoral work is the task of the whole community. Pastors do not abdicate their responsibility as educators (after the example of Baxter), but they do understand that in their teaching they are equipping the laity for their ministry of pastoral activity (or living the faith in the world). This goal has been clearly defined:

All Christians are called to the pastoral activity of guiding one another and caring for the world. [Pastoral activity] is the ministry that serves to make God's Word known in the every-

day lives of people and in the affairs of the world. Pastoral teaching is the activity that brings persons into the saving grace of Jesus Christ and makes possible the fuller realization of the life that is possible as members of the community of faith. "Pastoring" is a ministry of humanizing that can liberate people from forms of oppression and free them to share in the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ in the world.³⁵

The pastor, or the "representative minister," re-presents Christ to, for, and with the people to the end that they too will be in ministry.³⁶ Persons so equipped can then be about the task of pastoral activity in the world.

As a model, this approach is not only true to the Protestant concept of the "priesthood of all believers," but also it grounds the theoretical in a practical educational program that enables the church to fulfill its mission. It puts primary responsibility on the pastor, not to fulfill the mission alone but to provide the atmosphere (envision the future) whereby the community may learn and grow together in the fulfillment of its mission. As Schleiermacher observed, the manifestation of religion in one person can kindle the flame in another;³⁷ a community of enthusiastic people sharing together the journey and a common commitment to the future and the mission involved in realizing that future will revitalize the church and touch those beyond the church.

Catechesis and certainly guidance place great stress on the notion of preparation as a continual activity of the church, not only for the sake of the church but more especially for the sake of the members and their growth towards full humanity. From his Moravian experience, Schleiermacher gained a lifelong appreciation for the need for vital

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 fellowship without which no religious education was possible. The case may be somewhat overstated, but the fact is that little, if any, religious education takes place in the home (where Schleiermacher felt it belonged, at least for children) or elsewhere in society. As a minimum, the church must supplement the educational efforts of home and family, if not assume full responsibility. As it envisions its own mission and sets the goals and objectives by which it will live its mission, the church must understand that spiritual transformation (conversion) and formation (nurture) are ongoing elements of its life and program.³⁹

Confirmation illustrates the point. Instead of a "booster shot," confirmation can be seen as a repeatable sacrament for renewing one's commitment in relation to the normal changes that come in personal self-understanding, especially when the gospel or a conscious spiritual pilgrimage has been part of a person's life.⁴⁰

That the Schleiermacher of the third Speech was also an avid teacher of confirmation may seem mildly contradictory, but as a pastor,⁴¹ he apparently gave lessons with zeal. Not only his example, but also his technique is instructive. For after the Bible, Schleiermacher used⁴² both the catechism and the creeds of the church. However, he did not follow either rigidly; in fact, his practice illustrates another point frequently made in this section, i.e., that a specific educational program must be tailored to the local situation. In other words, because people learn in different ways and have different needs or agendas, variety is always necessary. As pertains to the use of creed and catechism, these tools helped to regulate practice and prevent

confusion, but since these tools came from another time and place, they may not translate well across cultures and age groups. They could be used in part or in total or supplemented with other resources as necessary for the stimulation and growth of the particular people with whom the pastor works. Schleiermacher was willing to rely on the good judgments of the clergy to build the understanding necessary to equip people to participate in the life of the church.

The use of ritual and liturgy also illustrates how spiritual formation and transformation can be seen as ongoing elements of the church's life and witness. Rituals, of course, are found within any community or culture and serve to order and guide the internal life of the people.⁴³ When combined with catechesis in particular, Westerhoff speaks of a praxis (or reflective action) by which the community comes to understand itself and its direction.⁴⁴ Sacraments serve a similar function, i.e., they provide a vision of the kingdom or a vision of an alternate to what is and what it takes to realize the better way.⁴⁵ In general, liturgy functions as dramatic re-presentations of how God has acted in the world and what that activity demands of the faith community. They define identity and capture significant moments of insight and commitment. They enhance community life and set the boundaries beyond which the faithful cannot move without losing their identity.⁴⁶ Potentially at least, they have a very important role in sustaining the spiritual formation and transformation of a people.

Perhaps the vitality of the church is a matter of recognizing that faith itself is a verb.⁴⁷ Faith is a way of looking and seeing, of perceiving and understanding. Because life is fluid and people change,

faith itself will change. Hopefully, "change" means "growth," but growth does not just happen. Growth occurs because someone, the community, intends for it to happen and then takes steps to fulfill its intentions. Faith, spirituality, must be nurtured, celebrated, encouraged, supported, tested, and used, all of which are part of the church's educational praxis. It asks at every moment: Whose are you and to whom do you belong? In seeking answers, pastor and laity alike commit themselves to a task, a journey built on a broad understanding of catechesis, that extends over a lifetime. From Schleiermacher the church learns how to view itself in a post-modern world. From contemporary educational theory, it learns how to take that vision, live it in a post-modern world, and so fulfill its mission to those who have begun and who yet need to begin a pilgrimage of spiritual transformation.

NOTES: CHAPTER 5

1

Thomas W. Ogletree, "Dimensions of Practical Theology: Meaning, Action, Self," Practical Theology, ed. Don S. Browning (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 83ff.

2

Burkhart, "Schleiermacher's Vision...", 43ff., for this paragraph. Philosophical Theology made use of historical criticism to determine the true nature of Christianity and included Apologetics (the distinction between Christianity and other religions) and Polemics (the diagnosis of diseases in doctrine and/or polity). Historical Theology studies the past, not as an end in itself nor even for its impact on the future (a practical consideration). It includes Exegesis (understanding the canonical documents), Church History (the career of Christianity), and Dogmatics (the present situation of Christianity). Verheyden, Introduction, Life of Jesus, xxxvii, notes that these two disciplines are dialectically related.

3

Fowler, "Practical Theology...", 149 f., is more positive in the conclusions he draws from Schleiermacher regarding the church's praxis than is Burkhart, 47f., 53. Burkhart argues that in spite of its purposefulness in the ecclesiastical community, in practice Schleiermacher's practical theology becomes "technology."

4

Fowler, "Practical Theology...", 154. Schleiermacher himself spoke of the ideal church leader as a "thinking pastor" whose theological endeavors in the service of the community made him or her a "prince of the church"; see Christian, 31.

5

The language belongs to Fowler, "Practical Theology...", 155. Ogletree, 94, identifies the goal of practical theology itself as the formation of human selves and as the embodiment of Christian faith in the lives of persons. Ministry (as an art form) creates the contexts that encourage, call forth, and support fidelity. Recovering "pastoral teaching" is essentially a theological task in which the churches learn how to clarify, articulate, and act the faith that the gospel represents" (Allen J. Moore, "Pastoral Teaching: A Revisionist View," Quarterly Review, Fall 1983: 65, emphasis added).

6

More inclusively, ministry itself becomes highly purposeful and particular. John Deschner, in a series of unpublished lectures on the subject, speaks well when he defines practical theology (which certainly includes a theology of ministry) as "the church's theologically disciplined self-criticism and projection concerning how it understands, manifests, orders, and inter-relates the congregation's contemporary life of worship, fellowship, and service in the local context of the whole People of God" (manuscript, 5). At its most basic level, ministry is very much goal-oriented; the nature of the goal is the function of theological reflection, and both the theological reflection and the goals are oriented to the life of a particular people of God. Without such an exercise in practical theology, the church loses a sense of its vocation.

7

See Chapter 2, note 9 and text, this project.

8

The third Speech is summarized from Schleiermacher, On Religion, 119-146.

9

Redeker, 144f., (emphasis added). Schleiermacher uses fairly traditional language to define these terms: Conversion (or the equivalent expression, redemption) is the human response to an impulse coming from Christ; Repentance (as remorse) is a change of heart; Faith represents the appropriation of Christ's perfection and blessedness; Justification (or its equivalent term, reconciliation) means forgiveness of sin and the adoption of the sinner as a child of God. It is important to note that both repentance and faith and justification originate in the life-awakening acts of salvation radiating from Christ (Redeker, 144f.). The means of awakening such consciousness will be discussed in this and the following section.

10

Christian, 128f. Such "person-forming" is never complete because of sin. Even so, the believer is secure in grace. The tension between the disposition towards God-consciousness and the obstruction of God-consciousness is the age-old battle between the spirit and the flesh; cf. Schleiermacher, Christian Faith, #66.

11

So maintains Westerhoff; see Neville and Westerhoff, 145f. He goes on to note (p. 148) that nurture alone is not sufficient because cultures seek to socialize people into life as it is while God calls persons to be signs of shalom—obviously something that normal socialization practices do not teach. Thus the need for conversion precedes nurture.

12

In Niebuhr's words, Christ gives the shape of his own spiritual life to others and causes them to come of age as brothers of the last Adam; see Niebuhr, On Christ, 258. For the distinction between "Christo-centric" and "Christo-morphic" see also Niebuhr, On Christ, 212. Redeker, 149, takes a different approach and maintains that the center of Schleiermacher's theology is Christology: Christology correlates with the faith relationship established by God between the Creator and the creature.

13

See, e.g., Neville and Westerhoff, Learning, 107f. For Westerhoff prayer represents every aspect of one's conscious relationship with God, another way of speaking of the "spiritual life." Consciousness, however, is united with "historical and reflective action." Interestingly enough, for Schleiermacher prayer is also a way of living with God that focuses on and changes the person; see Gerrish, Prince, 65f., for Schleiermacher's understanding of prayer.

14

The praxis component cannot be over-emphasized in any spirituality. As Westerhoff notes, as thinking, feeling, and willing selves, spiritual persons will emphasize the praxis element in their being, i.e., that their lives do naturally contain willing, passionate, reflective action (Learning, 118f.).

15

Westerhoff and Edwards, 299f. In his film, "Will Our Children Have Faith?", Westerhoff stresses the church's common story, vision, memory, ritual, and content as key factors in the community that in turn will influence the kind of faith children will have. See also John Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith? (New York: Seabury, 1976), which is the basis of the film. It can be seen that the same factors provide a crucial background for testing experiences and integrating the elements of adult faith.

16

For the effect of changing life agendas on educational programs, see Robert L. Browning and Roy A. Reed, The Sacraments in Religious Education: An Ecumenical Model (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1985), 248ff. A summary of the stages of faith can be found in Neville and Westerhoff, 162.

17

The phrase belongs to Ross Snyder, although he had primarily critical moments in mind. In its present context, the phrase is used more generally to represent the variety of pastoral opportunities for education. In addition to catechesis, spiritual direction, and formal individual instruction (the subject of the next section), teachable moments will arise in and/or make use of worship, liturgy, classrooms, sermons, administrative tasks (board meetings, e.g.), visitation, newsletters, the arts, retreats, personal study, prayer groups, and service outlets and the summons to vocation. Encompassing all of these

is the notion of participation (especially a mutually disciplined participation) in the faith community in general; i.e., participation itself contributes to faith formation when the leadership of the church is intentional in its educational programming. The absence of the Sunday school from the list is noteworthy. Westerhoff (Faithful Church, 293ff.) undoubtedly speaks for many in his assessment that, while useful, the Sunday school will not occupy a significant place in the future because it is too tied to the past to be responsive to the needs of a new age. Westerhoff believes the present is as significant as the 1st, 4th, 11th, and 16th centuries for the church, a claim that carries tremendous implications for education.

18

Cf. Richard R. Niebuhr, Names of God, 177f.: religious consciousness uses aesthetic awareness to express itself; conversely, the same religious feeling that produces art can also be translated into speech (dogma). Neville and Westerhoff, 120ff., go so far as to identify an excessive rationalism with the sickness of contemporary spiritual life. They join others in emphasizing storytelling and resisting doctrine which (as with Schleiermacher) is the consequence of reflection on revelation. The intellectual mode is not ignored, but supplemented with the receptive-intuitive mode which stresses symbol, imagination, visions and dreams, and experience (Neville and Westerhoff, 133f.). The issue of Schleiermacher-as-mystic surfaces here too; see Chapter 2, note 37 and text, this project; Redeker, 42.

19

Gerrish, Prince, 28, 30. The "feminine nature" is surely not limited to women only!

20

Neville and Westerhoff, 111.

21

Neville and Westerhoff, 110. Osborn, 54, adds that feeling of the high mystic order is essential for religion (emphasis added). To assist in the development of what is already there, namely, religion, Schleiermacher suggests exploiting the religious stirrings observable in children: "Children search everywhere for something surpassing the accustomed phenomenon and the light play of life. However many earthly objects are presented for their knowing, there still seems to be another sense un nourished. That is the first stirrings of religion. A secret, inexplicable presentiment urges them past the riches of this world" (quoted by Osborn, 57f., from the Speeches). Storytelling is especially important for children who will probably be unable to comprehend the concepts and doctrines of the adult world (Osborn, 61). How this differed from the Enlightenment, which stressed moral instruction while repressing the mysterious and the imaginative, is obvious.

22

See, e.g., Osborn, 28ff.

23

Osborn, 33, 163ff. For a discussion on the theological-philosophical sources of Schleiermacher's educational theories, see Osborn, 18ff. For a brief history of the changing role of education in the church since the Reformation, see Osborn, 4ff., 43ff. A question might also be raised about Schleiermacher's unbridled optimism since the 20th century seems to have dispelled confidence in the upward progression of the human race; a related question, and a frequently-heard criticism, concerns whether or not Schleiermacher was a "culture-Protestant" (see, e.g., Niebuhr, On Christ, 68f.). Christmas Eve seems to allow an easy accommodation between faith and culture; in fact, more than mere toleration, the culture actually seems to help nurture the faith. There may be some tendencies in the direction of cultural accommodation, but Schleiermacher did believe in the separation of church and state (Redeker, 53) because he felt the chances for renewal of the community were better with separation than with state control. Perhaps the more balanced evaluation would recognize (with Christian, 138f.) one of Schleiermacher's abiding legacies, a positive attitude toward society and the need to do theology in dialogue with the world.

24

Osborn, 33f., 41. Ethics is one of the sources of education.

25

See Fowler, "Practical Theology...", 148. A recurring theme in this context is that of vocation. With the specific subject of spiritual direction in mind, Merton speaks of the educational goal not in terms of salvation but in terms of a fruitful spiritual life, i.e., the Christian's vocation is to bear fruit; see Thomas Merton, Spiritual Direction and Meditation (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1960), 15. In his film, "Will Our Children Have Faith?", Westerhoff speaks of vocation as the calling to live into one's baptism. The emphasis on vocation is not accidental in Christian faith. For vocation gives persons an abiding sense of purpose, and purpose is one of the factors that distinguishes Christianity in relation to other religions (see Niebuhr, On Christ, 233).

26

In Faithful Church, 1ff., Westerhoff conceives of the catechetical model in terms of a journey or pilgrimage that is shared in community and that actualizes one's true being. This goes beyond the classical "production" metaphor of Locke and Hume where the teacher is a technician who shapes the raw material, the student, and the "romantic" metaphor of Kant and Rousseau where the teacher functions as a gardener encouraging the young seed, the student, to grow (298f.).

27

Westerhoff and Edwards, Faithful Church, 2ff., 297, 303, and Learning, 93f. Since the subject of proclamation is not mentioned

elsewhere, further discussion on Schleiermacher's theology of preaching and hermeneutics can be found in Niebuhr, On Christ, 77ff., and Redeker, 174ff., 199, 206.

28

Osborn, 16, 20f.

29

Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1982), 5.

30

Baxter, 105, emphasis added.

31

Westerhoff and Edwards, 302. Close intimate contact with individuals or in small groups gives the pastor the opportunity to instruct pilgrims in the meaning of their baptism (Westerhoff) and vocation at that moment.

32

As developed in Chapter 2, the "wilderness" may be conceived as the narrow (but not necessarily evil) confines of modern secularity; the "promised land" is a deeper spirituality, a living awareness of God's Spirit that transforms the person. One grows in spiritual awareness or lives into his or her baptism.

33

On the need to possess something special so as to have something worth reporting, cf. Merton, 19f., and Westerhoff and Edwards, 302. Regarding the spiritual director as authority, Allen Moore, 73, distinguishes the "tour bus guide" and the "trail guide".

34

Merton, 13f.

35

Allen Moore, 64 (emphasis added).

36

See Mary Elizabeth Moore, "The Minister and the People of God," Quarterly Review, Fall 1983: 34, et al. The re-presentation includes announcing God's call, sharing the gifts and resources of faith, envisioning God's future, and delineating the people's mission. An obvious implication here has to do with a shift in the pastor's own understanding of his or her function, specifically, away from the role of minister-as-manager (who administers a complex organization and ensures the continuity of institutional life) and towards the pastor-as-teacher who is involved in ministry with the people; see Allen Moore, 66, 72.

37

See the third Speech; Osborn, 60.

38

Osborn, 166ff.

39

See, e.g., Neville and Westerhoff, 149. Browning and Reed, 245ff., describes a one-three year Roman Catholic model of preparation that is quite intentional and very intense.

40

Browning and Reed, 191ff. (emphasis added). The authors note that when given to adolescents, confirmation recognizes growth in faith and witness and takes account of a process of maturing in Christ. Perhaps the process of nurturing should be seen as a lifelong process, celebrated at key moments where the renewal of one's baptismal covenant seems appropriate. Since confirmation grants God's Spirit to assume and perform one's ministry, Westerhoff argues for adult confirmation or even ordination of the laity (Neville and Westerhoff, 160f.).

41

Redeker, 73; Osborn, 170.

42

Osborn, 173ff.

43

Neville and Westerhoff, 94. Elsewhere, p. 3, the authors define liturgy as the regularized and routinized aspects of daily life.

44

Neville and Westerhoff, 91f. Liturgy is the action; catechesis is the reflection.

45

Browning and Reed, 129f. For an example of how baptism functions catechetically, see Browning and Reed, 145ff., and Neville and Westerhoff, 58-68, 160.

46

That the church's rituals are generally bland and unmoving (for this criticism, see e.g., Neville and Westerhoff, 153ff.) or are perceived as formal, mechanical, and essentially powerless repetition in worship does not call for further disregard of liturgy but for more intentionality in planning liturgy and worship experiences.

47

Cf. footnote 9 above. For Schleiermacher, faith itself is the creation of the Redeemer; at the least, this implies that the church, as the locus where the story, memory, and recollection of Jesus take place, needs to focus constantly on him. One's faith and identity change from increasing approximations of his spirituality. See Neville and Westerhoff, 162, 119, and James W. Fowler, Stages, 92f.

APPENDIX

Biographical Sketch of Schleiermacher

- 1768 FDES born at Breslau.
- 1783 Schleiermacher enrolled in Moravian School at Niesky; in a conversion-like experience, he becomes aware of a "higher order."
- 1785 Left Niesky for the Moravian seminary at Barby.
- 1787-89 Moved to the University of Halle.
- 1789-90 Moved to Drossen with his Uncle Samuel; a low point in his life.
- 1790-93 Tutor in the home of Count Dohna.
- 1794-96 Assistant pastor, Landsberg.
- 1796-1802 Chaplain at Charité Hospital in Berlin; marks the beginning of the creative period; Speeches published (1799).
- 1802 Began pastorate in Stolp.
- 1804 Professor at the University of Halle.
- 1805 Lectures on Dialectics; Christmas Eve published.
- 1809 Called to the University of Berlin to organize the theological curriculum; publishes A Brief Outline of the Study of Theology.
- 1821 Publishes first edition of The Christian Faith (revised 1831-32).
- 1834 Death.

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